Effigies Reverendi admodum viri
Johannis Wilkins nuper Episcopi
Cestriensis

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SERMONS
PREACH'D
Upon ſeveral Occaſions
Before the
KING
AT
WHITE-HALL.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,
JOHN WILKINS, late Lord
Biſhop of *CHESTER*.

To which is added,
A
DISCOURSE
Concerning
The Beauty of Providence.
By the ſame Author.

The Second Edition.

LONDON:
Printed by *A. M.* and *R. R.* for *John Gellibrand*
in St. *Pauls Church-Yard*, 1680.

(9), 95, (11), 101-176 p.

TO THE READER.

WHEN first these Discourses were sent to the Press, there was neither Epistle nor Preface design'd; but it being a thing altogether uncouth and unusual, I was unwilling to affect any thing of singularity, and in this affair (to be so great a Friend to the Bookseller and Printer, as)

as) to follow the common Road.

If there is any thing in the Publiſher that thou maiſt call folly or preſumption, it was done through ignorance or inadvertency; and ſince I acknowledg my fault, I hope you will pardon it.

As for the following Diſcourſes, they are ſo admirably well pen'd, and their contexture ſo ſmooth and even, that they are beyond all imaginable praiſe. It would argue nothing leſs

than

than preſumption to ſpeak in their behalf, and it needs nothing more than the name of its Author to Recommend it to the World.

Farewel.

To the Reader.

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Farewel.

A

SERMON I.

PRov. III. 16, 17. *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand Riches and Honour. Her ways are ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.*

SERMON II.

Eccleſ. 12. 13. *Let us hear the concluſion of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep his Commandments:* for this is the whole duty of man.

SERMON III.

Eccleſ. 12. 14. *For God ſhall bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

SERMON IV.

Eccleſ. 3. 11. *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: alſo He hath ſet the World in their heart, yet no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.*

SERMON I.

SERMON II.

SERMON III.

SERMON IV.

A SERMON

Preached before the

KING

A T

WHITE-HALL,

In Lent, 1669.

A

SERMON

Preached before

KING

AT

WHITEHALL

SERMON I.

PROV. III. 16, 17.

Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand Riches and Honour.

Her ways are ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.

THE chief deſign of the Wiſeman in this Text, is, to ſet forth the many great advantages that belong to *Religion*; in order to which, he doth here enumerate thoſe five principal things that muſt contribute to a complete ſtate of Happineſs in this World, namely, *Health*, and *Riches*, and *Honour*, and *Pleaſure*, and *Peace*; and aſſerts concerning them, that they are

are the proper effects of that wiſdom which conſiſts in being Religious.

This he expreſſes by way of *Allegory*, repreſenting Wiſdom (as is uſual for other Virtues) in the ſhape of a Woman, or Queen, with her Arms extended, in the poſture of directing and rewarding her Followers; holding in her right-hand the bleſſing of *Health*, or *length of Days*, the great Promiſe of the *Law*; to which the Precedence of the right-hand is therefore given, becauſe it is amongſt all worldly Bleſſings the greateſt and moſt deſirable; that, without which, a man cannot enjoy any thing elſe, nor ſo much as his own ſelf; *Length of days is in her right-hand.* And then, for thoſe other things, which the generality of men do ſo much covet and labour after, *Wealth*, and *Reputation*; theſe likewiſe are at her diſpoſal, and muſt proceed from her gift; *And in her left-hand, Riches and Honour.* And, as for the *Cheerfulneſs* of our conditions, he affirms, that

that the trueſt Pleaſure muſt be found in thoſe ways that are directed by her; *Her ways are ways of Pleaſantneſs.* And becauſe there are ſeveral things which have ſome preſent delight in them, ſeeming to *drop as the Honey-comb, and to be ſmoother than Oyl*, and yet upon tryal, do prove in the iſſue, *bitter as Wormwood, and ſharp as a two-edged Sword*; therefore 'tis added, that her ways are not only *pleaſant*, but they are likewiſe ſafe and quiet; *all her paths are Peace.* Prov. 5. 4.

That theſe things are the effects of Religion, is here only affirmed, which, to them who believe the Authority of Scripture, is evidence ſufficient: But, it were eaſy to prove this concerning each of them, by all other kinds of evidence, of which ſuch matters are capable.

I purpoſe at this time to treat only concerning the third of them, namely, *Honour*; as being the moſt proper Subject for this Preſence and Audi-

Auditory. And that this can only be attain'd by Religion and Virtue, I doubt not but to prove with ſo much ſtrength and perſpicuity, as ſhall be ſufficient to convince any one who will but attend and conſider.

In order to this, I ſhall firſt endeavour to ſtate the true nature of *Honour*, and to ſhew wherein the moſt proper Notion of it doth conſiſt; 'tis an equivocal word, and is capable of various ſenſes.

Firſt, Sometimes 'tis uſed to denote *worthy and creditable Parentage*; the being derived from ſuch Anceſtors as have been famous in their Generation for ſome eminent Virtue or Exploit: Wherein there is this benefit, that a man hath great examples in his own Family, and ſo much the ſtronger Obligation not to degenerate from them: But it ſhews rather what ſuch a man ſhould be, than what he is; and, to a perſon that is not Vertuous, doth prove a prejudice rather than an advantage. *Second-*

Secondly, Sometimes 'tis uſed to ſignify *Titles of Place and Dignity*, according to the various orders and degrees of Nobility in ſeveral Nations: But, this kind of Honour depending meerly upon the Princes Favour, muſt therefore be wholly extrinſecal, and conſequently can have no more due to it than a meer *external* reſpect. Such perſons may challenge from us, that we ſhould give them their due Titles, and demean our ſelves towards them with that Obſervance and Ceremony as becomes their Quality: But then, as to *inward* eſteem and affection, they can demand no greater a ſhare of this, than according as their real worth and vertue ſhall require. The Royal Stamp upon any kind of *Metal* may be ſufficient to give it an *extrinſick* value, and to determine the Rate at which it is to paſs amongſt Coins, but it cannot give an *intrinſick* value, or make that which is but *Braſs*, to be *Gold*.

'Tis true indeed, there are ſome Callings and Relations of men, to whom an inward Veneration is due, though the perſons themſelves ſhould not be Virtuous; namely, *Magiſtrates*, and *Miniſters*, and *Parents*, and *Benefactors*; who, having ſomewhat of a Divine *Stamp* and *Impreſs* upon them, may therefore challenge from us, that we ſhould demean our ſelves towards them, both with ſuch an *outward* Reſpect as may become their *Places*, and with ſuch an *inward* Reſpect too, as may be ſutable to that *Image* which they bear, our *dependance* upon them, and *obligation* to them. But then, we cannot be obliged to think ſuch perſons good men, unleſs we have ſome evidence to believe them to be ſo, or at leaſt, not to be otherwiſe; So that they are beholding to ſomething extrinſical to their Perſons, namely, to their Callings and Relations, for that Honour which is paid to them.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, the word *Honour* is ſometimes uſed for that Eſteem and Reputation which a man hath in the World, eſpecially amongſt Virtuous Perſons; according to which ſenſe 'tis defin'd by *Tully* to be *Conſentiens Laus Bonorum*, the concurrent approbation of good men; when thoſe, who are beſt able to judg of real worth, ſhall both think and ſpeak well of others, this is properly honouring of them. And in this ſenſe (which is the moſt proper notion of the words) it is one of the greateſt bleſſings that this World can afford; much to be preferred before Riches, or Pleaſures, or Life it ſelf. *A good Name is rather to be choſen than great Riches, and loving kindneſs rather than Silver or Gold*, Prov. 22. 1. One that is a Generous, Virtuous man, will chooſe to dye, rather than do any thing that may expoſe him to Infamy: St. *Paul* was of this mind; *It were better for me to dye, than that any ſhould make my glorying void.* There have been ſome wiſe men, who have neglected

Tuſcul. Q. 1.

1 Cor. 9. 15.

and refuſed that other kind of *Honour*, conſiſting in Titles of Dignity, as conceiving more of burden and temptation in it, than of real advantage; but no man in his wits did ever deſpiſe a good name, unleſs ſuch profligate diſſolute wretches, as did either deſpair of, or reſolve againſt doing any thing that might deſerve it. 'Tis not eaſy to reckon up the many advantages that belong to this kind of *Honour*: 'Tis *Power*, inabling a man to do things great and worthy, to be uſeful to his Friends and his Countrey: 'Tis *Safety*, and doth give a man ſuch an intereſt in the eſteem and affection of others, as will make them concern'd for his Welfare, ready to ſtand by him and aſſiſt him in any kind of danger; which are ſo great advantages, that whoſoever ſhall wilfully neglect them, muſt needs be rendered very contemptible.

Having thus *Explained* the proper Notion of *Honour*, I proceed in the next place to *Prove*, that Religion

Religion and Virtue is the only means for the attaining of it. This I ſhall endeavour to do by *Teſtimony*, and by *Reaſon*; and by *Experience*, which are all the kinds of Arguments that ſuch matters are capable of.

Firſt, By *Teſtimony*. The Scripture doth abound in divers Aſſertions and Promiſes to this purpoſe: Such as are Religious are ſtiled the *Excellent of the Earth*, Pſal. 16. 3. and ſaid to be *more excellent than their Neighbours*, Prov. 12. 26. They are *God's peculiar Treaſure*. Deut. 32. 9. *The dearly beloved of his Soul*. Exod. 19. 5. *He ſets apart the Man that is Godly for himſelf*. Jer. 12. 7. Though ſuch perſons may be but low, as to their outward Condition; being put to *wander up and down in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented*, ſeeking for refuge *in Deſarts and Mountains, in Dens and Caves of the Earth*; yet may they upon the account of Religion, be of ſuch excellent value, that in the Judgment

of the Holy Ghoſt, *The whole World is not worthy of them*, Heb. 11. 37, 38.

Prov. 1. 9. Chap. 4. 8, 9. The Wiſe-man ſpeaking of Religion, ſaith, that *it ſhall be an ornament of Grace unto thy head, and as a chain about thy neck. Exalt her, and ſhe ſhall promote thee, and bring thee to honour; She ſhall give to thy head an ornament of Grace, and a Crown of Glory.* God hath engaged himſelf by promiſe to thoſe that are Religious, that *he will ſet them above other Nations, they ſhall be made the Head, and not the Tail*, Deut. 28. 13. He hath ſaid, *Thoſe that honour me,* John 12. 26. *I will honour*, 1 Sam. 2. 30. And certainly, he, who is the King of Kings, muſt needs be the Fountain of Honour, and able to diſpoſe of it as he pleaſes.

But, becauſe ſuch Perſons as are no friends to Religion, may have but a ſmall eſteem for the Authority of Scripture: Therefore to theſe I would ſuggeſt the concurrent Opinion of Wiſe

Wiſe Men in all former Ages. Though the Ancient *Philoſophers* were divided into various Sects, and differ'd very much from one another in ſeveral Opinions; yet, in this they have all agreed, that Honour is due only to Vertue, and doth not properly belong to any thing elſe. It would be tedious to enumerate the ſeveral Sayings to this purpoſe, out of *Plato*, *Ariſtotle*, *Tully*, *Seneca*, and the other Ancients: And certainly, that Man muſt needs have a very extravagant conceit of his own Abilities, who dares prefer his private Opinion, before the General Conſent of Wiſe-men in former Ages, ſuch as have been counted the greateſt Maſters of Reaſon, and moſt eminent for their Knowledg and their Wiſdom.

Secondly, I proceed in the next place to confirm this by the Principles of *Reaſon*, That Religion and Virtue is the cauſe of *Honour*. There may be a two-fold Cauſe of Things,

Moral,
Natural.

That is ſaid to be the *Moral* Cauſe, which doth diſpoſe a Man to ſuch a Condition, upon the Account of Fitneſs and Deſert; and in this ſenſe *Honour* is the *Reward of Vertue.* There is an equitable right, a ſuitableneſs and congruity, that Good Men ſhould be loved and eſteemed, and Vitious Men expoſed to ſhame: *As Snow in Summer, and as Rain in Harveſt, ſo is Honour unſuitable for a Fool,* Prov. 26. 1. The intermixing of Winter and Summer, would not cauſe a greater diſorder in the *Natural* World, than the croſs diſpoſal of *Honour* and contempt would in the *Moral* World. And hence is it, that the Laws of all Nations and Governments, have owned it as a Point of Policy, to excite their Subjects unto Virtuous and worthy Actions, by the Motive of *Honour*; and to deter

ter them from Vitious courſes, by the conſideration of the ſhame and contempt which belongs to them.

That is ſaid to be the *Natural* Cauſe of a thing, which doth by its own immediate efficacy produce the Effect; and in this ſenſe likewiſe is Vertue the Cauſe of *Honour*. The Fire doth not more Naturally produce heat, than Goodneſs doth Love and Eſteem; Which will appear very plain, if we conſider, That *Inward* Honouring is nothing elſe, but the Believing a Man to be Worthy and Virtuous; and the Teſtifying this by our Words and Actions is *Outward* Honouring. Now, nothing can be more evident, than that the beſt means for one to be thought good, is to be ſo.

A Man may excel in Strength, Beauty, Riches, Learning, Wit, which are all commendable things, and will contribute to a Man's eſteem; But, if we apprehend ſuch a one to be notoriouſly Vitious, This eſteem will not be accompanied with Love, but

with

with Fear, Hate, and Envy; becauſe ſuch a one hath by theſe things ſo much the greater advantage of doing Miſchief in the World: Whereas on the other ſide, though a Man ſhould be deſtitute of all theſe other advantages, without any Nobility in his Anceſtors, but of a ſmall Eſtate, a low Condition; yet, if we believe him to be a truly Virtuous Man, it cannot be, but that we muſt pay a Veneration to him.

All things whatſoever have ſome Natural Standard, whereby the Goodneſs of them is to be meaſured; namely, their ſuitableneſs unto that chief end, for which they are deſigned. We do not therefore account a *Ship* to be good, becauſe 'tis curiouſly painted and gilded, or carved and inlayed, but becauſe 'tis fitted for all the purpoſes of Navigation, which is the proper end and uſe of a Ship: Nor do we therefore account a Sword to be good, becauſe it hath a rich Hilt, and an Embroidered Scabbard, but becauſe it is fit

for

for the proper uſe of a Sword, which is to cut. They are the compariſons of *Seneca*, ſpeaking of this Subject; *In homine quoque, nihil ad rem pertinet, quantum aret, quantum fœneret, a quam multis ſalutetur*, &c. *ſed quam bonus ſit.* It ſhould be ſo likewiſe in our eſteem of men, who are not ſo much to be valued by the Grandeur of their Eſtates or Titles, as by their inward goodneſs.

Every man is endowed with a natural Principle, inclining him to a ſtate of Happineſs, and hath in ſome meaſure, both an ability to judg of and a freedom and liberty for applying himſelf unto thoſe Duties, which are the proper means for the promoting of this end. And this being the peculiar difference of the Humane Nature, therefore a man is not upon any other account to be juſtly praiſed or blamed, but according to the right or wrong uſe of this natural liberty; and conſequently as a man doth find either in himſelf or others, a conſtant and firm reſolution to make a right

right use of this, so should he proportion his esteem accordingly; preferring this *inward* Greatness, this rectitude of Mind, whereby a man is resolved in every condition to do that which shall appear to be his duty, before any *external* Greatness whatsoever.

There are two kind of Virtues amongst all the rest, which are by general consent esteemed Venerable, and such as do advance the Reputation of those who are endowed with them;

namely { *Wisdom*, *Courage.*

Because they have a more intrinsick rise, and do less depend upon external advantages, but seem rather to be rooted in the inward frame and temper of mind; and withal, are most beneficial both to our selves and others: The former signifying a man to have those *intellectual* abilities which are proper to his kind, whereby

by the Humane Nature is to be diſtinguiſhed from other things: The other, becauſe it argues a Rectitude in the *Will*, and a Power to ſubdue the Paſſion of Fear, which is moſt natural to our preſent ſtate of Infirmity; and withal doth ſupport a man againſt Difficulties, and inable him for thoſe two Services, of Doing and Suffering as he ought. And, for this Reaſon, the Vices that are oppoſite to theſe, are amongſt all others counted the moſt ſhameful; there being no greater Reproach to be caſt upon any one, than to be eſteemed a Fool, or a Coward.

Now a Man that is Irreligious, cannot juſtly pretend to either of theſe Vertues.

1. For *Wiſdom*. This is ſo eſſential to Religion, that in the Scripture-phraſe (eſpecially in the Writings of *David* and *Solomon*) they both go under the ſame *Name*, and there is very good reaſon why it ſhould be ſo; becauſe there is ſuch an intimate agreement between the *Natures* of them:

them: The *Philoſopher* doth define Wiſdom to conſiſt in an ability and inclination, to make choice of the right *Means* in the proſecution of our true *End*. And nothing can inable a Man for this but Religion, both as to the *Subordinate* End of *Temporal* Happineſs in this World; but chiefly with reſpect to that great and *Supreme* End of *Eternal* Happineſs in the World to come.

2. And then for *Courage*, 'Tis not poſſible for a Man to be truly Valiant, unleſs he be withal truly Religious: He may be bold and daring, and able (in a fearleſs manner) to ruſh upon any danger; but then he muſt ſtifle his Reaſon from conſidering what the Conſequences of things may be, what ſhall become of him hereafter, if he ſhould miſcarry. There being no man whatſoever ſo totally free from the Apprehenſion of a future ſtate, but that when he is ſerious and conſiderate, he muſt be ſtartled with Doubts and Fears concerning it: So that there cannot be any rational,

rational, ſedate, deliberate courage, but only in ſuch, as have ſome good hopes of a better Eſtate in the other World; And, 'tis Religion only that can inable a Man for this.

3. I proceed to the Third kind of Argument to this purpoſe, from *Experience*; By which, I mean that Practical Knowledg, which every man may attain by his own Obſervation of the uſual courſe of things in the World: And, by this, it will appear, that no kind of perſons have been more highly reverenced in the Hearts and Conſciences of others, than thoſe that have been moſt eminent for their Vertue and Religion; which hath been always true, both with reſpect to Publick Communities, and Private Perſons.

Firſt, For *Nations*; If we conſult the Stories of former Times, we ſhall find that ſaying of *Solomon* conſtantly verified, That *Righteouſneſs doth exalt a Nation, but Sin doth prove a reproach to it*: And more eſpecially the ſin of Irreligion and Prophaneneſs; As this doth increaſe in any Prov. 14. 34.

Nation, ſo muſt the Honour and Reputation of that Nation decreaſe. The *Roman* Empire was then at the higheſt, as to its Name and Greatneſs, when it was ſo as to its Virtue; when they were moſt punctual in obſerving the Rites of their Religion, (though that were a falſe way of worſhip) moſt Heroical in their Juſtice, Courage, Fidelity, Gratitude; then it was that they deſerv'd to Govern the World, and to be had in greateſt Honour above all other Nations. And not only *Tully* and *Polybius*, two Heathen Writers, who, upon that Account, might be thought more partial; But St. *Auſtin* alſo and *Lactantius*, two of the Fathers, do aſcribe the flouriſhing of that Empire, when it was at his height, to the Religion, and Piety, and Virtue of thoſe times; And, as they did afterward degenerate from this, ſo did they decline likewiſe in their Greatneſs and Honour.

2. Thus alſo hath it been with *particular perſons*; Amongſt the *Heathen*, What Elogies do we find in the Ho-

Honour of *Socrates*, *Ariſtides*, *Cato*, *Epictetus*? The latter of which, though but a poor Slave, had yet ſuch a Veneration paid to his Memory, that his Earthen Lamp by which he was wont to ſtudy, was, after his Death, ſold for 3000 Drachms.

Nor was it otherwiſe amongſt the *Chriſtians*; The *Apoſtles* were but poor Fiſher-men, Illiterate Mechanicks; Many of the *Martyrs* were but of mean condition, much Oppoſed and Perſecuted in the World; And yet theſe Men, during the time of their lives, were highly Reverenced amongſt thoſe that knew them; and ſince their Deaths, what can be more Glorious than that Renown which they have amongſt Men, when the greateſt Kings and Princes will not mention their Names without Reverence; when whole Nations are willing to ſet apart, and to obſerve Solemn Days and Feſtivals in Honour of their Memories?

And, as it hath always been thus formerly, ſo I appeal to every mans

breaſt, whether it be not ſo now: Let them but examine what their Inclinations are towards ſuch Perſons, whom they believe to be truly Virtuous: Not only to ſuch amongſt them as are their particular *Acquaintance* and *Friends*, but likewiſe to *Strangers*, nay, to very *Enemies*; whether they do not eſteem, and love them, and will well to them.

I ſhall crave leave to ſpeak briefly to two *Objections* that may be made againſt what I have been proving.

I. The Scripture ſaith (ſpeaking of good Men) That *the World ſhall revile and perſecute them, and ſpeak all manner of evil againſt them:* Our Saviour himſelf was *deſpiſed and rejected of Men*; And his Apoſtles were *uſed as the rubbiſh and off-ſcouring of all things.*

Iſa. 53. 3.

To theſe two things may be ſaid by way of *Anſwer.*

Firſt, It cannot otherwiſe be expected, but that when a New Religion is to be ſet up, men muſt be highly concern'd in their oppoſing of it, and

and of thoſe that promote it: And the forecited Texts do particularly relate to this very caſe, when *Chriſtianity* was firſt introduced into the World, and to be propagated by the Sufferings of thoſe that Profeſſed it; which being an *exempt caſe*, and not according to the uſual courſe of things, therefore theſe Texts are not equally applicable to other Times and places, when and where the True Religion hath obtained, and the Kings prove Nurſing-Fathers to it.

Secondly, Thoſe that knew our Saviour and his Followers, did highly Honour them: And, as for others that were ignorant of them, and not ſufficiently convinced of their Goodneſs, 'tis no wonder that they uſed them accordingly. The moſt vicious perſon that is, if he doth either know, or have reaſon to think another to be Virtuous, muſt of neceſſity pay to him an Inward Reverence; Becauſe 'tis not in any mans power, ſo far to offer violence to his own Faculties, as to believe any thing a-

againſt its Evidence. 'Tis true indeed, men have a greater power over their *Words* and *Actions*, than they have over their *Belief*; and therefore they may call, and uſe ſuch a one as they pleaſe; they may revile and perſecute him; And, in this ſenſe, *Honor eſt honorante*; But, even in ſo doing, they ſeem to pay a Veneration to *Religion* it ſelf, whilſt they are fain to diſguiſe it under the Names of Hypocriſie, Hereſie, Superſtition, thereby to juſtifie themſelves in their oppoſing of it.

II. It appears by the Experience of all Ages, that Vicious Men are ſometimes had in Honour.

To this it may be Anſwer'd.

1. *External* Honour may be due to them.

2. *Internal* Honour may be given to them, by ſuch as do not know them. The meer Opinion of being Vertuous, muſt of neceſſity have the ſame advantage in this reſpect, with *Real goodneſs*; The main difference is, that it is not like to laſt, becauſe it

it is almoſt Morally impoſſible for a Man, who doth only diſſemble Vertue, to ſtand always upon ſo ſtrict a guard, as not to be diſcover'd. If it be ſaid, that men, who are Notoriouſly Vitious, are ſometimes applauded, and Cry'd-Up for their Virtue; It may be anſwer'd, That this cannot be ſo truly ſtiled *Honouring* as *Flattering*; The proper Notion of which doth conſiſt in giving undue Commendations; Nor will any contribute to it, but vile Sycophants, the worſt kind of Enemies, and the moſt Incompetent Judges of real worth. Such only being fit to give Praiſe, who are themſelves Praiſeworthy.

Now if this be the true ſtate of the Caſe I have been ſpeaking to, That the generality of Wiſe and Conſiderate Men, in all former times, have atteſted to this Truth; if the Reaſon of the thing require that it muſt be ſo; And if it appear accordingly from Common Experience to be ſo; If the moſt Material Objections a-

gainſt it, may be ſo plainly and fully ſatisfied, then there can be no ſufficient Reaſon to doubt of the truth of this Propoſition, That Religion and Virtue is the moſt proper means to promote the Intereſt of Honour, which is the thing I am to prove.

I ſhall crave leave to ſuggeſt two things by way of *Application*, and I have done.

Firſt, This may convince men of Folly, who ſeek for *Honour* by any other Means. The great Inſtances which are commonly given, of Mens being *Fools*, is, from their chuſing ſuch Means as are altogether inſufficient for the End they Deſign: As the endeavouring to make a *Blackamore* White, by waſhing of him, *&c.* But, the uſing of ſuch Means as are not only inſufficient for, but oppoſite unto, and Deſtructive of the End they Propoſe; this is a degree above *Folly*, and may be ſtiled *Madneſs*: 'Tis as if a Man ſhould run into the Water to dry himſelf, and into the Fire to cool himſelf; And yet this is the

Caſe

Caſe of many Men in the World, who propoſe to themſelves ſuch Courſes for the Promoting of their *Honour*, as are moſt Deſtructive of it; Namely, Prophaneneſs, and Contempt of Religion, Deſpiſing that which other Men ſtand in Awe of; by which they think to get the Reputation of *Wit*, and of *Courage*; Of *Wit*, by pretending to penetrate more deeply into the Nature of things, and to underſtand them better than others do; not to be ſo eaſily impoſed upon, as other Credulous People are. Of *Courage*, by their not being ſo eaſily ſcared at the Apprehenſion of Danger at a diſtance.

But, the plain Truth is, ſuch Perſons do hereby prove themſelves to be both *Fools* and *Cowards*.

Fools, In miſtaking their great Intereſts, in making choice of ſuch means as can never promote the End they Deſign; There being no kind of Men that are more expoſed (whatſoever they themſelves may think of it) to Publick Infamy and Hatred,

than thoſe that ſeek for Credit by deſpiſing of *Religion*. *Fools*, in venturing their *future Eſtates* and their *Souls* upon ſuch hazards, as all mankind would cry-out-upon for the moſt palpable folly and madneſs, if they ſhould do the like towards their *Temporal Eſtates*, or their *Bodies*.

Cowards, In being more afraid of little dangers, becauſe they are *preſent*, than of greater, becauſe they are *future*, and at a diſtance. As that Souldier, who doth more dread the preſent danger of Fighting, when he is obliged to it, than the future danger of ſuffering *Martial* Law for running away, may juſtly be eſteemed a notorious Coward; ſo may that man who is more afraid of a *preſent* inconvenience, by incurring the prejudice and diſpleaſure of his looſe Companions, to whom he would be acceptable, than of a *future* miſchief from the Judgment of God.

No man will eſteem another to be truly Valiant, becauſe he is not afraid to do ſuch vile unworthy things as will

will expoſe him to the diſpleaſure and puniſhment of the Civil Magiſtrate; much leſs ſhould be ſo accounted, for daring to do ſuch things as will in the iſſue expoſe him to Divine Vengeance.

For men of no real worth to expect the eſteem and affection of others, as it is very *unequal* on their parts, requiring Brick without Straw; ſo neither is it *lawful* nor *poſſible* for others to allow it them: not *lawful*, becauſe it is as well a man's duty *to contemn a vile perſon, as to honour them that fear the Lord.* Not *poſſible*, becauſe men muſt neceſſarily judg according to the moſt prevailing Evidence; nor can they eſteem ſuch an one to be worthy, whom they know to be otherwiſe, any more than they can believe that to be white and ſtraight, which they ſee is black and crooked. Pſal. 15. 4.

Secondly, If theſe things be ſo, it will hence follow, that men who have any ſenſe of *Honour*, ſhould, by theſe conſiderations, be excited to a love of

of that which is the only means to it, Namely, *Religion* and *Vertue*. Thoſe of ſlaviſh, ſordid Spirits, may be more eaſily perſwaded by the conſideration of *Gain*; but no *motive* can be more powerful with noble and generous *Minds* than that of *Honour*. That man takes very ill meaſures of things, who doth not make it one of his principal cares to keep his Name unſpotted; it being no eaſy matter to recover a forfeited Reputation.

Such Profligate Wretches, as are without any ſenſe of *Honour* or *Shame*, may juſtly be eſteemed the Publick *Peſts* and *Miſchiefs* of *Mankind*, and ſuch as ought to be baniſhed from among them, as being the common enemies to Government and Societies.

Of all ſorts of men, there lies a peculiar Obligation upon them that are in *Publick Places*, to preſerve their Reputations clear, and without blemiſh: A private Perſon is not ſo much concern'd to look after *Publick Fame*, as that man is, who is ingag'd

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in *Publick Employment.* He that can abundantly ſatisfy himſelf with the Conſcience of well-doing, while he is in a *Private Station*, if once he be called to any ſuch Employment, where he muſt be uſeful to others by his Authority, 'Tis moſt fitting then, that he ſhould ſeek the Aid of *Opinion*, and *Publick Eſteem*, becauſe 'tis this which Rules the World, and ſtamps upon Things the Rates at which they are to paſs.

There is nothing in this World that we can propoſe to our ſelves of greater benefit, than the Love and Eſteem of good Men; I have ſhewed before that it is *Power*, 'tis *Safety:* And beſides all the Advantages which we have by it *whilſt we live*, 'tis one of thoſe things that will *abide after us*, when we are gone out of this World; and for that reaſon a ſpecial regard is to be had to it: And, the more Wiſe any Man is, the more Care will he take to tranſmit a Grateful Memory of himſelf to future times; And, ſince he muſt be ſpoken of

of after his departure, he will take Care that he be well ſpoken of, that his Name may be as a precious Ointment, leaving a Perfume behind it; That men may *riſe up at the mention of it, and call him bleſſed.*

I ſhut up all, with that affectionate Exhortation of the Eloquent *Apoſtle*, Phil. 4. 8. *Finally Brethren, whatſoever things are Venerable, whatſoever things are Lovely, whatſoever things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praiſe, think of theſe things. And the Peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your Hearts and minds through Jeſus Chriſt.*

A

SERMON

Preached before the

KING

AT

WHITE-HALL,

1670.

UMI

SERMON II.

ECCLES. XII. 13.

Let us hear the Concluſion of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep his Commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

THis Book is one of *Solomon's Philoſophical Diſcourſes*, containing ſuch principal Obſervations about *Human Affairs*, as are apt to offer themſelves to the thoughts of every ſerious conſiderate man, eſpecially concerning thoſe things which may more immediately either promote or hinder our *Happineſs*.

This Text is the *Concluſion* which he infers upon the whole matter, that which

which is the moſt natural reſult of all ſuch Debates and Enquiries.

In the former part he had taken into conſideration thoſe ſeveral *ſtates of life*, to which men uſually apply themſelves for *Happineſs*; namely, *Learning* and *Wiſdom*, *Mirth* and *Pleaſures*, *Power* and *Greatneſs*, *Riches* and *Poſſeſſions*: Each of which he doth by great variety of Arguments, prove to be vanity and vexation, and altogether inſufficient to the End for which they are deſigned.

Then he takes notice of the ſeveral *Accidents of life*, whether they concern our *Endeavours*, or our *Perſons*.

1. For our *Endeavours*. The moſt likely means are not always effectual for the attaining of their End. The utmoſt that Human Councils and Prudence can provide for, is to take care, when they are to contend in a Race, that they be ſwifter than thoſe who run againſt them; or when they are to fight a Battel, that they be ſtronger than thoſe whom they are to encounter. And yet *the Race is*

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not always to the ſwift, nor the Battel to the ſtrong; neither yet Bread to the wiſe, nor yet Riches to men of underſtanding, nor Favour to men of skill; but time and chance happens to them all. (i.e.) There is a ſecret Providence which doth over-rule all thoſe worldly events in ſuch a manner, as is not accountable to Human Reaſon. Even amongſt *Secular Buſineſſes*, which we are apt to think moſt within our reach and compaſs, there is nothing ſo much under the power of the wiſeſt Counſels and Endeavours, but that the Providence of God may interpoſe for the diſappointing of it, and render it ineffectual. Chap. 9. 11, 12.

And then for thoſe *Accidents* to which our *Perſons* are liable, He obſerveth theſe three things:

1. Our obnoxiouſneſs to *Pain* and *Sickneſs*, which he ſtiles by the names of *Wrath* and *Sorrow*; under which, when a man lies languiſhing, none of his Worldly Enjoyments will ſignify any thing to him; nor will they be able to afford him any ſuch eaſe or Ch. 5. 17.

help, but that he may be thereby *cut off in the midſt of his days, and then all his thoughts periſh*; or elſe waſte away a great part of his life with much anguiſh and wearineſs; and may ſometimes, perhaps, be driven to that extremity by noiſome and painful Diſeaſes, as to chuſe ſtrangling and Death, rather than Life.

2. If it be ſuppoſed, that by the ſtrength and cheerfulneſs of a Man's natural temper, he ſhould eſcape theſe, and *live many years, and rejoyce in them all*; yet *he muſt remember the days of darkneſs, which ſhall be many.* (i. e.) Thoſe who devote themſelves to continual Mirth and Pleaſure, cannot yet avoid the thought of their *future eſtates*, what ſhall become of them hereafter, when they are to depart out of this World; but that the remembrance of this will be often thruſting into their Minds when ever they are retired and ſerious. And this being to them a dark obſcure condition concerning their well-being, in which they can have no reaſonable hopes, muſt

Ch. 11.8.

muſt needs therefore be a great damp and allay to all their other Enjoyments.

3. But in the third place: Suppoſe a man ſhould be able to avoid *ſickneſs*, and to put the trouble of *theſe thoughts* likewiſe far from him; yet there is ſomewhat elſe which he cannot poſſibly decline, *Old Age* will unavoidably ſteal upon him, with all the infirmities of it; *When the grinders ſhall be few, and appetite ceaſe; when thoſe who look out of the windows, ſhall be darkned, and the keepers of the houſe ſhall tremble:* when a man ſhall become a burden to himſelf, and to his Friends; when thoſe of his neareſt Relations, whom he hath moſt obliged by kindneſs, ſhall think it time for him to depart unto his *long home*, to creep off the Stage, and make room for ſucceeding Generations; and then, after a little Funeral-pomp of the *Mourners going about the ſtreets*, a man ſhall be buried out of the way, and forgotten: *For there is no remembrance of the wiſe, more than of the fool; ſeeing that which now is, in the days to come ſhall be forgotten.* Ch. 12. 3. Ch. 12. 5. Ch. 2. 16.

gotten. Every Generation producing ſomewhat which ſeems new & ſtrange, to take up Men's talk and wonder, and to drown the Memory of former Perſons and Actions. And I appeal to any rational man, Whether theſe are not ſome of the moſt material reflections that occur about Human Affairs.

Now from all theſe premiſes put together, he inſerts this Concluſion in the Text, That *to fear God, and keep his Commandments, is the Whole of man.* (i.e.) To be ſerious in the matter of Religion, and careful about our future ſtates, is that which every conſiderate man, after all his other diſquiſitions and experiments, will find to be his greateſt intereſt, that which doth moſt of all deſerve his care and ſtudy.

There are theſe Two parts in the words:

1. A *Deſcription of Religion*, which in the former Clauſe is ſaid to conſiſt in *fearing God*, and *keeping his Commandments.* An awful apprehenſion of the Divine Nature, and an obedient ſubmiſſion to His Will.

2. A

2. A *Commendation of Religion*, in the latter Clauſe, *This is the Whole of man.*

It is the ſecond of theſe only, which I purpoſe to treat of at this time.

In the handling of which, the firſt thing to be enquired into, is, What is the true import and meaning of this phraſe in the Original: והבל האדם for the underſtanding of which, it will be proper to conſider the ſeveral ways of expreſſing it in other Tranſlations.

The *Septuagint* and the *Vulgar* do render it *verbatim*, *This is All*, or *Every man.* The word *Duty*, which is ſupplied by our *Engliſh*, being not in the *Original*, or in other *Tranſlations. This ought to be the way and courſe of all mankind*, ſo the *Targum. This is the courſe to which every man is deſigned*, ſo the *Syriack. This will be moſt profitable and advantageous to men*, ſo the *Arabick.* This is *the whole of man*; ſo ſome of our later Interpreters, moſt proper to the ſcope of the place, it being an uſual *Analalogy*

in the *Hebrew*, *Totius univerſalis, pro toto integrante*, All for Whole.

So that according to theſe various Interpretations of the words, they may contain in them a three-fold reference: To the *Eſſence*, the *Happineſs*, the *Buſineſs* of man.

According to which, the ſence of them muſt be, That Religion, or the *fearing of God*, and *keeping his Commandments*, is a matter of ſo great conſequence to Human Nature, that

1. The *Eſſence* or Being of man, may be ſaid to conſiſt in it.

2. The *Happineſs* or well-being of man doth depend upon it.

3. The great *Buſineſs* or Duty of man, is to be converſant about it, and to labour after it.

Theſe particulars I ſhall endeavour to make out by ſuch clear Principles of Reaſon, atteſted to by ſeveral of the wiſeſt Heathen Writers, as may be enough to ſatisfie any ſerious man who is able to underſtand the reaſon and conſequence of things, and will but attend and conſider.

1. I begin with the firſt: Religion is of ſo great importance, that the *Eſſence* of man may be ſaid to conſiſt in it. Mankind may be conſidered under a two-fold notion:

1. More *Separately*, and by it ſelf, according to that Principle whereby 'tis conſtituted in ſuch a rank of Creatures.

2. More *Complexly*, as joyned in Society, for which Man ſeems to be naturally deſigned, and without which he could not well ſubſiſt. Now Religion will appear to be Eſſential to him in both theſe reſpects.

1. As conſidered *Separately*, according to thoſe Principles by which he is framed. That which doth conſtitute any thing in its Being, and diſtinguiſh it from all other Things, This is that which we call the *Form* or *Eſſence* of a thing. And this, for the Human Nature doth conſiſt in thoſe very things which are the chief Principles and Foundations of Religion; namely, the *Apprehenſions of a Deity*, and an *Expectation of a future ſtate* after this

life: Which no other Creature, below Man, doth partake of; and which are common to all Mankind, notwithſtanding the utmoſt endeavours that can be uſed for the ſuppreſſing of them.

As for what is commonly alledged in the behalf of *Reaſon*, it may be obſerved, that in the Actions of many Brute Creatures there are diſcernable ſome kind of foot-ſteps, ſome imperfect ſtrictures and degrees of Ratiocination; ſuch a natural Sagacity as bears a near reſemblance to Reaſon. From whence it may follow, that it is not Reaſon in the *general*, which is the Form of Human Nature; But Reaſon as it is *determined* to Actions of Religion, of which we do not find the leaſt ſigns or degrees in Brutes. Man being the only Creature in this viſible World, that is formed with a Capacity of worſhiping and enjoying his Maker. Nor is this any new Opinion, but ſuch as ſeveral of the Ancient Writers, *Philoſophers*, *Orators*, *Poets*, have atteſted to; who make this Notion of a Deity, and Adoration of him, to be the true difference betwixt Man and Beaſt. *Plu-*

Plutarch aſſerts it to be a very improper thing to own ſuch for Men, who do not acknowledg and adore the Deity. And in another place, he affirms Irreligion to be a kind of Stupor, whereby Men are deprived of their Senſes.

So *Tully*: *Ex tot generibus, nullum eſt animal*, &c. Amongſt all the living Creatures that are in the World, there is none but Man that hath any notion of a Deity; and amongſt Mankind, there is no Nation ſo wild and barbarous, but pretends to ſome Religion.

And in another place, *Quis hunc hominem dixerit?* Why ſhould ſuch a one be accounted a Man, who by what he ſees in the World, is not convinced of a Deity, and a Providence, and of that adoration he owes to it? Of the ſame ſenſe is that of the *Satyriſt*, who ſpeaking of Religion, ſays this of it: *Deleg.* l. 1.

——Separat hac nos *Juvenal.*
A grege Brutorum, atq; ideo venerabile ſoli Sat. 15.
Sortiti ingenium divinorumque capaces.

'Tis

'Tis this (ſaith he) that doth diſtinguiſh us from Brute Creatures, That we have Souls capable of Divine Impreſſions.

So that, by what hath been ſaid, it ſhould appear, that the Definition of Man may be rendered as well by the Difference of *Religioſum*, as *Rationale*. As for that Inconvenience which ſome may object, That Atheiſtical and Prophane perſons will be hereby excluded: Why ſo they are by other Differences likewiſe: ſuch perſons having no juſt pretence to *Reaſon*, who renounce *Religion*: and it were well, if they might not only be *reckoned* among Beaſts (as they are by the *Pſalmiſt*, where he ſtiles them *Brutiſh*) but *driven* out amongſt them likewiſe, and baniſhed from all Human Society, as being publick Peſts, and Miſchiefs of Mankind, ſuch as would debaſe the Nobility of our Natures, to the condition of Brute Creatures, and therefore fit only to live amongſt them. Which brings me to the

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2. Conſideration of Man as a *Sociable* Creature. Religion is *eſſential* to him in this reſpect alſo, as being the ſureſt Bond to tye men up to thoſe reſpective duties towards one another, without which, Government and Society could not ſubſiſt.

There is a remarkable paſſage in *Plutarch* to this purpoſe, where he ſtiles Religion, the *Cement of all Communities, and the chief Baſis of all Legiſlative Power.* And in another place he ſays, That 'tis much more eaſy to build a City in the open air, without any ground to found it upon, than to eſtabliſh a Government without Religion. *A City* (ſaith he) *may make ſome ſhift to ſubſiſt without Walls, Schools, Theaters, Houſes; nay, without Money, but not without Religion.* Againſt *Colotes.*

If it were not for this notion of a Deity, and thoſe natural impreſſions which we have concerning Juſtice and Probity, ſo neceſſary for the conſervation of Human Society; inſtead of thoſe well-ordered Governments and

and Cities which are now in the world, Mankind must have lived either wild and solitary in Caves and Dens, like Savage-Beasts: or else in Troops of Robbers, subsisting upon the spoil and rapine of such as were weaker than themselves.

Nat. Deor. L. 1. *Pietate sublata, fides etiam, & Societas humani generis, & una excellentissima virtus Justitia tollitur*, Take but away the awe of Religion, and all that Fidelity and Justice, so necessary for the keeping up of Human Society, must perish with it.

'Tis this fear of a Deity, and the sense of our obligation to Him, that is the only effectual means to restrain Men within the bounds of Duty. And were this wholly extinguished, there would follow such wild Disorders and Extravagancies amongst men, as would not leave so much as the face or least shadow of Virtue or Honesty in the World: There being no kind of Vice which men would not abandon themselves unto, considering the impetuousness of their

their own natural appetites, and the power of external temptations, were this reſtraint from Religion once removed or aboliſhed.

The two chief Oppoſites to Religion, are *Profaneneſs* and *Superſtition*. Both which, are prejudicial to Civil Government: The one by *deſtroying* Conſcience, the ſtrongeſt obligation to Political Duties: The other by *perverting* and abuſing it; introducing in the ſtead of it, a new *Primum Mobile*, which raviſheth the Spheres of Government, and puts them into a preternatural courſe, as a Noble Author hath elegantly expreſſed it. Lord *Bacon's* Eſſays.

The two grand Relations that concern Society, are *Government* and *Subjection*. And Irreligion doth indiſpoſe men for both theſe.

1. For *Government*. Without Religion, Magiſtrates will loſe that Courage and Confidence belonging to their ſtations, which they cannot ſo well exert in puniſhing the Offences of others, when they are guilty of

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the ſame or the like themſelves. *Thoſe that ſit on the Throne of Judgment, ſhould be able to ſcatter away evil with their eyes*, as *Solomon* ſpeaks, *Prov.* 20. 8. By their very preſence and look, to ſtrike an awe upon Offenders. Which will not be ſo eaſily done, if they ſhould lye under the ſame guilt themſelves; *Sine Bonitate nulla Majeſtas*, ſaith *Seneca*: The very nature of Majeſty doth denote *Goodneſs* as well as *Power*. And without this, Governours may eaſily loſe that *Reverence* which is due to them from others, and conſequently that *Authority* which they ought to have over them. When they ceaſe to be Gods in reſpect of their *Goodneſs*, they may diminiſh in their *Power*. And though they ſhould be able to keep men under as to their Bodies and Eſtates, yet will they decline as to that awful Love and Reverence whereby they ſhould ſway over the Hearts and Affections of men.

The Philoſopher in the Fift Book of his Politicks, doth lay it down as a Rule

a Rule for Magiſtrates, that they muſt be careful to give publick Teſtimonies of their being religious and devout; for which he gives this double reaſon: Becauſe the people will be leſs ſubject to entertain any jealouſy or ſuſpition of *ſuffering injury* from ſuch whom they believe to be religious. And withal, they will be leſs ſubject to *attempt the doing of injury* againſt ſuch; as knowing, that good Magiſtrates are after a more eſpecial manner under the Divine Favour and Protection, having God to fight with them, and for them. 2. The want of Religion will indiſpoſe men for the condition of *Subjects*, and render them looſe and unſtable in thoſe duties of obedience and ſubmiſſion required to that ſtate. How can it be expected from that man who dares affront and deſpiſe God himſelf, that he ſhould have any hearty reverence for his Deputies and Vicegerents? Thoſe who are deſtitute of Religion and Conſcience, as they are not to be truſted in any *ordinary*

dinary private duty towards thoſe with whom they converſe, much leſs can they be uſeful in any ſuch *extraordinary* Action, whereby the *publick* welfare is to be promoted. Where there are no ſeeds of Piety and Virtue, there can be nothing of Honour or Magnanimity.

He that is ſubject only upon the account of *Wrath*, and the *power of the Sword which is over him*, will be no longer ſo, when he hath an opportunity of eſcaping or reſiſting that Power. Nor is there any poſſible way to ſecure men in their quiet ſubjection and obedience, but by their being obliged *for Conſcience ſake*. And therefore ſuch kind of perſons, as by their open profaneneſs and contempt of Religion, do endeavour to deſtroy Conſcience from amongſt men, may juſtly be eſteemed as the worſt kind of Seditious Perſons, and moſt pernicious to Civil Government.

Whatever Diſputes have been raiſed concerning the lawfulneſs of puniſh-

puniſhing men for their diſſenting Conſciences in matters of Religion; yet never any man queſtioned the lawfulneſs of puniſhing men for their profaneneſs and contempt of all Religion. Such men as renounce Conſcience, cannot pretend that they ſuffer for it. And certainly this Vice doth upon many accounts deſerve the greateſt ſeverity of Laws, as being *in its own nature* deſtructive of the very Principles of Government, and the Peace of all Human Societies: Beſides the Miſchiefs *conſequent* upon it from Divine Vengeance.

So that upon all theſe accounts, there is juſt reaſon to infer the truth of this Propoſition, That Religion is *totum hominis* in this firſt ſenſe, as it refers to the *Eſſence* of Man conſidered either *Separately*, or as a Member of *Society*.

2. 'Tis ſo likewiſe with reſpect to the *Happineſs* and well-being of Man. That is properly ſaid to be the chief End or *Happineſs* of a

thing, which doth raiſe its nature to the utmoſt perfection of which it is capable according to its rank and kind. So the chief good belonging to a Vegetable or *Plant*, is to grow up to a ſtate of maturity, to continue to its natural period, and to propagate its Kind, which is the utmoſt perfection that kind of Being is capable of. And whereas *Senſitive* Creatures, beſides thoſe things which are common to them with *Plants*, have likewiſe ſuch faculties, whereby they are able to apprehend external objects, and to receive pain or pleaſure from them; Therefore the Happineſs proper to them, muſt conſiſt in the Perfection of theſe Faculties, namely, in ſenſible pleaſures, the enjoying of ſuch things as may be grateful to their ſenſes. But now *Mankind*, (if we will allow it to be a diſtinct rank of Creatures ſuperior to Brutes) being endowed with ſuch Faculties, whereby 'tis made capable of apprehending a Deity, and of expecting a future ſtate after this life;

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It will hence follow, That the proper happineſs of man muſt conſiſt in the perfecting of this Faculty; namely, in ſuch a ſtate as may reconcile him to the Divine Favour, and afford him the beſt aſſurance of a bleſſed Immortality hereafter. Which nothing elſe but Religion can ſo much as pretend to. And that this is moſt agreeable to Natural Light, may appear from the Teſtimonies of ſeveral of the wiſeſt Heathens, *Pythagoras*, *Plato*, *Epictetus*, &c. who aſſert a Man's Happineſs, or chief End, to conſiſt in a likeneſs or reſemblance to the Divine Nature, in following of God, endeavouring to imitate him whom we worſhip, which are but ſeveral deſcriptions of Religion.

'Tis true indeed, the nature of *Man*, by reaſon of thoſe other Capacities, common to him with *Plants* and *Brutes*, may ſtand in need of ſeveral other things, to render his condition pleaſant and comfortable in this World, as *Health*, *Riches*, *Reputation*, *Safety*, &c. Now herein is the

great advantage of Religion, that beſides the principal work which it doth for us, in ſecuring our future Eſtates in the other World; It is likewiſe the moſt effectual means to promote our happineſs in this World; and that not only *Morally*, upon account of that Reward which Virtuous Actions do entitle a man unto from a juſt and a wiſe Providence; But *Naturally* alſo, by reaſon of that Phyſical efficacy, which the Duties of Religion have in procuring for us each of thoſe things, wherein our Temporal Hippineſs doth conſiſt; in promoting the welfare not only of *particular* perſons, but of *publick* Communities of Mankind in general, and of the whole *Univerſe*. Inſomuch, that if we could ſuppoſe our ſelves in a capacity of capitulating with God, concerning the Terms upon which we would ſubmit to his Government, and to chuſe the Laws we would be bound to obſerve, It were not poſſible for us to make any Propoſals, which upon all Accounts ſhould be more advan-

vantageous to our own Intereſts, than thoſe very Conditions to which we are obliged by the Rules of Religion and Virtue. And herein doth the reaſonableneſs of Religion, and the Beauty and Wiſdom of Providence moſt eminently appear towards Mankind, in governing us by ſuch Laws as do moſt apparently tend to the perfecting of our Natures, and in making that only to be our *Duty*, which is our *Intereſt*.

3. Religion is *Totum hominis*, with reſpect to the chief *Buſineſs* and *Duty* of Man, that which he ought to be moſt intent upon, and converſant about, as to his Employment in this World. That *General* Calling to which every man of what rank or quality ſoever is to be engaged. Men are diſtributed under other *particular* Callings, according as their Education, Abilities, Friends, and ſeveral Opportunities do diſpoſe of them. But the obligation of Religion, being of univerſal concernment, doth ex-

tend to all and every particular, there being none exempted from it. *Hoc iſt omnis homo*, Every man is concerned in it. And it is *totum hominis likewiſe*, 'Tis his calling, the chief buſineſs about which he is to be employed.

I do not ſay, that a man's thoughts are always to be taken up about the immediate Acts of Religion, any more than a Traveller is always to have his mind actually fixed upon the thought of his Journey's end. This would be inconſiſtent with the infirmity of our natures, and the neceſſity of our conditions in this World. But yet, as he that is upon a Journey, doth ſo order all his *Particular* Motions, as may be moſt conducible to his *General* End; ſo ſhould men *habitually*, though they cannot *actually*, in every affair have reſpect to their chief End, ſo as to obſerve all the duties of Religion, and never to allow themſelves in any thing againſt the rules of it. And he that hath this care continually upon

on his mind, (though he be but a Secular perſon) may properly be ſaid to make Religion his *Buſineſs*.

The Wiſe-man, in the beginning of this Book, had propoſed as his grand Query to be diſcuſſed, to find out *what was that good for the ſons of men, which they ſhould do under the Heavens, all the days of their lives.* (i.e.) What was the chief employment or buſineſs, which they ſhould apply themſelves to in this World. And here in the Text he aſſerts it to be the buſineſs of Religion, *Fearing God, and keeping his Commandments:* Suitable to that Precept of *Moſes*, Deut. 10. 12. *And now, O Iſrael, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to ſerve the Lord thy God, and keep his Commandments:* And the *Practiſe* of St. *Paul*, who made this his daily *exerciſe, to keep his Conſcience void of offence, both towards God, and towards men.* Ch. 2. 3.

To the Reaſonableneſs of this, ſeveral of the wiſeſt Heathens have at-

Moral. l. ad Eudem in fine.

teſted. That's a remarkable paſſage in *Ariſtotle* to this purpoſe, where he ſtates that to be the moſt deſirable proportion of all Worldly Felicities and Enjoyments, which is moſt conſiſtent with men's devoting themſelves to the buſineſs of Religion: And that to be either too much or too little of wealth, or honour, or power, *&c.* whereby men are hindred in their meditating upon God, or their worſhipping of him.

So *Epictetus*, diſcourſing concerning the work and buſineſs he was deſigned to, hath this paſſage: If I had been made a Nightingale or a Swan, I ſhould have employed the time of my life in ſuch a way as is ſuitable to the conditions of thoſe Creatures: But being made a Man, capable of ſerving and worſhipping that God from whom I had my Being, it's but reaſon that I ſhould apply my ſelf to this, as being my proper work and buſineſs: τοῦτο μοῦ τὸ ἔργον ἔχει. And therefore hereunto will I devote my ſelf, as being the chief Employment to which I am deſigned.

So

So *Antoninus*: Every thing (ſaith he) is deſigned for ſome kind of work, Beaſts and Plants, the Sun and Stars, τὸ ὑπερ᾽ τί, And what do you conceive your buſineſs to be? Senſual pleaſures? Bethink your ſelf a little better, whether this be ſuitable to the Nobility of your nature, and thoſe excellent faculties with which you are endowed? Lib. 8. Sect. 19.

Men uſually apply themſelves to that as their chief buſineſs, which may quit coſt and be worth their labour, by which their Intereſt is moſt promoted. And there is nothing can be more reaſonable, than for that to be the chief buſineſs of a man's Life, which is the chief end of his Being. Which is the third thing I propoſed to ſpeak to.

I crave leave to mention two Inferences very briefly by way of Application, and I have done.

If this be ſo, that Religion is of ſo great Importance, that it may be ſtiled the *Whole of man*, with reference to all thoſe things that are of greateſt

eſt moment, The *Eſſence*, the *Happineſs*, the *Buſineſs* of Man:

1. What Monſters of Folly, and Madneſs, and Contradiction, muſt thoſe men be, who do upon this account put a greater value upon themſelves, as being more learned, and wiſe, and better than others, becauſe they can contemn and deſpiſe Religion? Certainly, by all the Laws of God and Men, ſuch Miſcreants ought to be rendered moſt vile and contemptible themſelves. Their Diſcourſes ought not to be liſtned unto without nauſeouſneſs and deteſtation. Their Perſons ſhould be uſed as the Lepers were under the Law, whoſe company every one was obliged to avoid, as being unclean infectious perſons. And perhaps this might be one good way, if not of curing themſelves, yet of hindring their Miſchiefs upon others, when they ſhould find themſelves abhorred and abandoned by all ſober men.

2. How dear ſhould the Concernments of Religion be to every one of us! How ſerious ſhould we be in the

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Profeſſion and Practice of it our ſelves! How zealous in promoting the Honour and the Power of it amongſt others! The things of this World are full of uncertainty, and of ſhort continuance. *When a few days are paſt, we muſt all of us go to the place whence we ſhall not return.* And when we come to die, nothing then will be of any advantage to us but Religion, *The teſtimony of our Conſciences, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, we have had our Converſation in this world.* Upon which we may confidently expect, that *there is laid up for us a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord the Righteous Judg, will give unto us at the day of his Appearance*; when he ſhall come *to bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, wheeher it be good, or whether it be evil.*

A

SERMON

Preached before the

KING

Charles 2d

AT

WHITE-HALL,

In LENT, 1670.

A

SERMON

Preached before the

KING

AT

WHITE-HALL.

SERMON III.

ECCLES. XII. 14.

For God ſhall bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

THis Book doth contain a Philoſophical Diſquiſition concerning a ſtate of *Happineſs*; wherein the Wiſe man doth particularly diſcuſs each of thoſe Subjects, which according to the various opinions and tempers of men, are believed to have any pretence to it.

The precedent Verſe (as I have formerly ſhewed) doth contain *the Concluſion of the whole matter*; the chief inference and reſult from all the former Debates

Debates and Enquiries; wherein he asserts, that every man's true happiness doth consist in being religious, In *fearing God*, and *keeping his Commandments*.

And though this Conclusion had been sufficiently proved by great variety of Arguments, in the foregoing Discourse; yet he thinks fit here in the close of all, to back and enforce it with one Argument more, which above all others is most apt to make deep impression upon the minds of men; and, (if any thing can) to perswade them to the Duties of Religion: And that is the consideration of the last Judgment, in the words of the Text, *For God shall bring*, &c.

That which I intend from these words, is to prove, against the Infidels and Scoffers of this Age, the Reasonableness and the Credibility of this great Principle of Religion, concerning a future state of *Reward* and *Punishment*.

Though the Principal Evidence for this do depend upon Scripture, especially

eſpecially the New Teſtament, where it is ſaid, That *life and immortality is brought to light by the Goſpel.* Yet in a point of ſo great moment and conſequence as this is, it is not to be imagined, that God ſhould have *left himſelf without a Witneſs* to all the Nations of the World, but that all men ſhould be endowed with ſuch natural Capacities and Notions, as being improved by Conſideration, will afford ſufficient evidence for the belief of this great Fundamental Principle. 2 Tim. i. 10.

As for ſuch men, who live under the ſenſe of Guilt, whoſe Intereſt it is that there ſhould be no future account, it cannot be otherwiſe expected from ſuch, but that they ſhould be willing to diſ-believe this. And from hence it is, that ſome of the Ancient Philoſophers have employed their Learning and Subtilty, to diſpute themſelves into ſome kind of doubts and uncertainty about it. And yet the generality even of theſe have been forced to acknowledg it much more probable than the contrary. And as

for the *Vulgar* ſort of people, who are guided by the more ſimple dictates of Nature, theſe have in all *Ages* and Nations ſubmitted themſelves to this Doctrine, and profeſſed a firm belief of it. And though *Vulgar Opinion* be but a very bad Topick about ſuch matters as may gratify men in their eaſe and ſenſual appetites; yet in ſuch other Opinions as are croſs to their Worldly Intereſts, it may argue ſuch things to be from ſome natural impreſſion upon their minds, which they muſt believe, and cannot otherwiſe chuſe.

The Arguments I would make uſe of to this purpoſe, may be reduced to theſe three general Heads:

1. From the *ſuitableneſs* of this Principle, to *the moſt natural Notions of our Minds.*

2. The *Neceſſity* of it, to *the Government of mens Lives and Actions in this World.*

3. The *Neceſſity* of it, for *the vindication of Divine Providence.*

1. I begin with the firſt: The *ſuitableneſs* of it *to the moſt natural Notions of*

of our Minds, and thoſe kind of Impreſſions which belong to us, as we are Reaſonable Creatures. We ſee by experience, that all other things (ſo far as we are able to judg) *Minerals*, *Plants*, *Beaſts*, &c. are naturally endowed with ſuch Principles, as are moſt fit to promote the perfection of their natures in their ſeveral Kinds. And therefore it is by no means credible, that *Mankind* only, the moſt excellent of all the other Creatures in this viſible World, for the ſervice of whom, ſo many other things ſeem to be deſigned, ſhould have ſuch kind of Principles interwoven in his very Nature, as do contain in them meer cheats and deluſions. And therefore whatſoever thoſe things are, which the generality of Mankind, eſpeclally the moſt *wiſe* and the moſt *conſiderate* part of them do agree in, ought to be allowed for highly credible; otherwiſe it muſt follow, that we are framed with ſuch kind of Faculties, as in our moſt cautious exerciſe of them, are more likely to *ſeduce* us, and expoſe us

to Error, than to *direct* and lead us to the Truth.

But I ſhall endeavour to manifeſt this more particularly, by theſe three Conſiderations.

1. This Principle is moſt ſuitable to the general *Apprehenſions* of *Mankind*, concerning the nature of *good* and *evil*.

2. To thoſe *natural Hopes* and Expectations, which the generality of *good men* have, concerning a ſtate of future *Happineſs*.

3. To thoſe *natural Fears* and Expectations, which the generality of wicked men are poſſeſſed with, concerning a *future ſtate of Puniſhment* and *Miſery*.

1. This Principle is moſt ſuitable to the *general Apprehenſions of Mankind* concerning the nature of *good* and *evil*. All men heretofore have agreed, that there is ſuch a Thing as the *Law of Nature*, whereby things are diſtinguiſhed into *good* and *bad*; according to which, the Actions of men are determined to be either *Virtuous*

tuous or *Vicious*. And as the one of theſe, doth in the eſſence of it imply *Comelineſs* and *Reward*; ſo doth the other denote *Turpitude* and *Puniſhment*. Theſe things being implied in the very definitions of *Virtue* and *Vice*. And from hence it will follow, That as there is ſome Superior Power who hath put this Law into our Natures; ſo will he take care to enforce the obſervance of it, by rewarding and puniſhing men accordingly. This being implied in the nature of a Law.

If there be nothing in the naked eſſence of things that makes them to differ, but what doth meerly ariſe from *Cuſtom* and *Poſitive Laws*; why then Cuſtom and Law would be able to render it a very virtuous and commendable thing for a man to be *ingrateful*, a *breaker of Compacts*, a *falſe Witneſs*, a *Perjured perſon*; which is ſo monſtrous a Poſition, that the common Reaſon of Mankind will abhor it upon the firſt propoſal. Nothing is more obvious, than that there is an univerſal deſire amongſt men, of ſeeming

honeſty: The moſt impudent and profligate wretch being loth to be eſteemed to be, what really he is. The very Sin of Hypocriſie, ſo general amongſt men, doth give a large Teſtimony to the *Beauty of goodneſs*, and the *Deformity of Vice*. Nor is there any account to be given, why there ſhould be impreſſed upon the nature of men ſuch a value for the one, and diſlike for the other, if there were not in the things themſelves, ſomething ſuitable to thoſe contrary affections.

We ſee by experience, that there is ſuch a kind of Reſt and Acquieſcence in the mind, upon the *diſcovery of Truth*, and the *doing of Virtuous Actions*, as belong to natural Bodies, when they are in their proper places: Which may argue theſe things to have ſome peculiar ſuitableneſs to the Soul of man, and that the oppoſites to them do offer violence to ſome natural Principle belonging to it.

2. This Principle is moſt ſuitable to thoſe natural *Hopes* and *Expectations* which the generality of *good men*

men have concerning a ſtate of *future Happineſs*. From whence doth ariſe that Confidence and Courage, whereby thoſe of meaneſt Quality and Abilities (if otherwiſe Virtuous perſons) can ſupport themſelves in their ſufferings for that which is good: Which doth neceſſarily ſuppoſe in them a ſtrong, and even a natural belief and perſwaſion of ſuch a future ſtate, wherein their ſufferings ſhall be conſidered and rewarded.

Beſides that, there is a natural deſire in all men, after a ſtate of *Happineſs* and *Perfection*. And if we conſider the utter impoſſibility of attaining to any ſuch condition in this life, This will render it highly credible, That there muſt be another ſtate wherein this Happineſs is attainable: otherwiſe Mankind muſt fail of his chief End, being by a natural Principle moſt ſtrongly inclined to ſuch a ſtate of Happineſs as he can never attain to. As if he were purpoſely framed to be tormented betwixt theſe two Paſſions, *Deſire* and *Deſpair*;

an earneſt Propenſion after Happineſs, and an uter incapacity of ever enjoying it. And, which is yet more conſiderable, the *better* and the *wiſer* any man is, the more earneſt deſires and hopes hath he after ſuch a ſtate of Happineſs. And if there be no ſuch thing, not only *Nature*, but *Virtue* likewiſe muſt contribute to make men miſerable; than which, nothing can ſeem more unreaſonable to thoſe who believe a Juſt and a Wiſe Providence.

3. This Principle is moſt ſuitable to thoſe *Fears* and *Expectations* which the generality of *wicked men* are poſſeſſed with, concerning a *future ſtate of Miſery*. Witneſs thoſe natural ſuggeſtions of Conſcience in the worſt of men, that upon any wicked action (though never ſo private) are oftentimes ſtartling of them, with the apprehenſions of another Judicature and Tribunal, before which they ſhall be called to an account for their cloſeſt ſins. All that ſecret regret, and thoſe inward ſmitings, *Laniatus & Ictus*, which are ſo often felt in the Minds of men,

men, upon the commiſſion of any great ſin, do argue ſome common intimations, even in the Light of Nature, of another Judgment after this life, wherein they ſhall be accountable for ſuch Actions, which men do not puniſh or take notice of.

And theſe natural Fears do uſually ſeize upon all kind of men promiſcuouſly, even thoſe who are moſt *Potent*, who by their own Wills can give Laws to Nations, and command mighty Armies, yet cannot they avoid theſe Checks and Laſhes of Conſcience, but that they will ſeize upon them, and ſhake them, as well as the pooreſt meaneſt Subject. Nor can ſuch as are moſt *obſtinately wicked*, who with their utmoſt ſtudy and endeavour, apply themſelves to the ſuppreſſing and diſbelief of theſe Notions, ſo wholly ſtifle them, but that they will be continually riſing up in their Minds, and purſuing of them.

Now as there is no man whatſoever, that is wholly freed from theſe fears of future miſery after death, ſo there

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is no other Creature but Man, that hath any fears of this kind. And if there be no real ground for this, then muſt it follow, That he who framed all his other Works with ſuch an excellent congruity, did yet ſo contrive the Nature of Man, the moſt noble amongſt them, as to prove a needleſs torment and burthen to it ſelf.

If it be ſaid, That theſe *Notions* may proceed from ſuch Principles as men have derived from *Inſtitution*, and the Teaching of others, and do not imply a Neceſſity of any ſuch *Natural impreſſions*.

To this it may be anſwered, That it it ſufficient to denominate them *Natural Notions*; if they have ſuch a *ſuitableneſs* to the minds of Men, as makes them to be generally owned by all thoſe who apply their thoughts to the conſideration of them. And that they have ſuch a natural ſuitableneſs, may appear, Becauſe Inſtitution cannot ſo eaſily *eradicate* theſe Notions, as it can *fix* them. Now if the meer teaching of others were

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it ſelf ſufficient to *impreſs* theſe Notions, without any ſuch peculiar congruity in the things themſelves, It would be as ſufficient to *deface* them again: Eſpecially conſidering the advantage on this ſide, from that natural repugnancy we have againſt any thing which brings diſquiet to our Minds. And nothing is more troubleſom in this kind, than the Fear which follows upon Guilt.

But now, though there have been ſeveral men of no mean Abilities, in ſeveral Ages, who have made it their buſineſs to root out of the Minds of men all ſuch troubleſome Notions about a future ſtate, endeavouring to perſwade themſelves and others, That as there was a time before they were born into the world, when they were not; So at their dying, or going out of it, they ſhall exiſt no more. And yet, though it be their intereſt to believe this, though they make it their ſtudy and buſineſs to perſwade themſelves and others to it; It may reaſonably be doubted, whether ever yet there

there hath been ſo much as one perſon that hath hereby become abſolutely free from theſe Fears: But for the moſt part, Thoſe who would have them eſteemed vain and imaginary, without any foundation in Nature, Theſe are the perſons who are moſt aſſaulted with them.

Hi ſunt qui trepidant & ad omnia fulgere pallent.

So powerful and *unconquerable* are theſe impreſſions, and therefore *natural.*

2. The ſecond Reaſon I propoſed to ſpeak to, was from *the Neceſſity of this Principle, to the right government of mens Lives and Actions in this world,* and the preſerving of Society amongſt them.

Nothing can be more evident, than that the Human Nature is ſo framed, as not to be regulated and kept within due bounds, without *Laws*; and Laws muſt be inſignificant, without the Sanctions of *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, whereby men may be neceſſitated to the

the obſervance of them. Now the temporal Rewards and Puniſhments of this life, cannot be ſufficient to this end; and therefore there is a neceſſity, that there ſhould be another future ſtate of Happineſs and Miſery.

All the Rewards and Puniſhments of this life, are to be expected either from the *Civil Magiſtrate*, who by virtue of his Place and Calling is obliged to the duty of diſtributive Juſtice: Or elſe from *Divine Providence*, according to that moſt uſual courſe which we find by Experience to be obſerved by Him, in his diſpenſation of theſe Temporal things. Now neither of theſe can afford ſufficient Motives for the government of Mens Lives and Actions.

1. Not all that may be expected from the *Civil Magiſtrate*, Becauſe there may be many good and evil Actions, which they cannot take notice of; and they can reward and puniſh only ſuch things as come under their cognizance. And if this were the only reſtraint upon men, it could be

be no hindrance from any ſuch Miſchief or Villanies which men had the opportunity of committing ſecretly. Nor would it extend to thoſe who had Power and Strength enough to defend themſelves from the Law, and eſcape the penalty of it, but that ſuch might without any check or fear, follow the inclinations of their own Appetites. Nor would it afford any remedy in the caſe of ſuch wicked Magiſtrates as ſhould invert the order of their Inſtitution, proving *Terrors to well-doers*, and *Encouragers to thoſe that do ill.*

2. Not all that may be expected from *Common Providence:* For though it ſhould be granted, that according to the moſt uſual and general courſe of things, both Virtuous and Vitious Actions are rewarded and puniſhed in this life; yet there may be many particular caſes which this Motive would not reach unto; namely, all ſuch caſes where a man's Reaſon ſhall inform him, that there is far greater probability of ſafety and advantage,

by committing a ſin, than can be reaſonably expected (according to his experience of the uſual courſe of things in the World) by doing his duty. Suppoſe the caſe of the three Children, or of any others called to Martyrdom, who may be threatned with torments and death, unleſs they will blaſpheme God, and renounce their Religion, If it appear to them very *probable*, ſuppoſe a hundred to one, that upon their refuſal, Their Perſecutors will really execute what they Threaten: And if on the other ſide it appear very *improbable*, ſuppoſe ten thouſand to one, that they ſhall not be delivered by a Miracle: In ſuch caſes, it is not to be expected that the conſideration of the ordinary courſe of Providence in the diſpenſation of Rewards and Puniſhments, ſhould be ſufficient to reſtrain a man from any kind of Blaſphemy or Villany whatſoever.

But the thing I am ſpeaking to, will more fully appear, by conſideration of thoſe horrid Miſchiefs of all kinds, that

that would moſt naturally follow from the denial of this Doctrine.

If there be no ſuch thing to be expected as Happineſs or Miſery hereafter, Why then the only buſineſs that men are to take care of, is their preſent well-being in this World; There being nothing to be counted either *good* or *bad*, but in order to this. Thoſe things which we conceive to be conducible to it, being the only *duties*; and all other things that are croſs to it, being the only *ſins*. And therefore whatever a man's Appetite ſhall incline him to, he ought not to deny himſelf in it (be the thing what it will) ſo he can have it, or do it without probable danger.

Suppoſe it be matter of *Gain* or *Profit* he is diſpoſed to, if he can cheat or ſteal ſecurely, this will be ſo far from being a *fault*, that it is plainly his *duty*, Becauſe it is a proper means to promote his chief End.

And ſo for other caſes of *Anger*, *Hatred*, *Revenge*, &c. according to this Principle, a man muſt take the firſt

firſt opportunity of ſatisfying theſe Paſſions, by doing any kind of miſchief to the perſons he is offended with, whether by *falſe Accuſations* and *Perjury*; or (if need be) by *poyſoning* or *ſtabbing* of them; provided he can do theſe things ſo, as to eſcape the ſuſpition of others, and Human Penalty.

Now let any man judg, what *Bears*, and *Wolves*, and *Devils*, men would prove to one another, if every thing ſhould be not only *lawful*, but a *duty*, whereby they might gratifie their impetuous Luſts; if they might either perjure themſelves, or ſteal, or murder, as often as they could do it ſafely, and get any advantage by it.

But theſe things are ſo very obvious, and undeniable, that the moſt prophane Atheiſtical perſons do own the truth of them. And upon this, they are willing to acknowledg, That *Religion* and the *belief of another life*, is a very politick invention, and needful for the well-governing of the world, and for the keeping men in awe, from

the doing any ſecret miſchiefs. Which (by the way) is a conceſſion of no ſmall advantage to the honour of Religon, conſidering that it proceeds from the greateſt profeſſed Enemies to it. Whereby they grant, that it is fit theſe things *ſhould be true*, if they are not; or at leaſt, that it is fit that the generality of men ſhould *believe them to be true*. And though they themſelves *pretend* to believe otherwiſe, yet are they not ſo far out of their wits, as to be willing that thoſe with whom they converſe, their Wives, and Children, and Servants, ſhould be of the ſame Opinion with them. Becauſe then they could have no reaſon to expect any ſafety amongſt them. What ſecurity could any man have of his Eſtate, or Honour, or Life, if ſuch with whom he is moſt familiar and intimate, might think themſelves at liberty to do all the ſecret miſchiefs to them, that they had opportunity to commit?

But there is one thing more, which thoſe, who profeſs to diſ-believe this Principle, ſhould do well to conſider; and

and that is this, That there is no imaginable reaſon, why (amongſt thoſe that know them) they ſhould pretend to any kind of *Honeſty* or *Conſcience*, becauſe they are wholly deſtitute of all ſuch motives as may be ſufficient to oblige them to any thing of this nature. But according to them, that which is called *Virtue* and *Religion*, muſt be one of the moſt ſilly and uſeleſs things in the world.

As for the Principle of *Honour*, which ſome imagine may ſupply the room of *Conſcience*, This relates only to external Reputation, and the eſteem which we have amongſt others; And therefore can be of no influence to reſtrain men from doing any ſecret miſchief.

From what hath been ſaid, it will follow, That thoſe who have any regard to their own ſafeties, ought to abandon all kind of ſociety with ſuch pernicious perſons, who according to their own Principles, muſt take all opportunities of doing any miſchief to others, which they are

able to effect, with any advantage to themſelves.

Now if this be ſo (as I have proved) that the nature of man is ſo framed, as not to be effectually perſwaded and wrought upon, without the conſideration of ſuch a future ſtate; If it be neceſſary to put in everlaſting motives, as the Sanctions of that Law, by which the Human Nature is to be governed; This muſt render it highly credible, that there is ſuch a ſtate. Becauſe it muſt needs be very unworthy of God, to conceive of Him, that he hath contrived the nature of one of his beſt and moſt noble Creatures, after ſuch a manner, as to make it incapable of being governed without falſhood and deceit.

3. The third and laſt Argument I propoſed to ſpeak to, was from the neceſſity of this Principle to the *vindication of Divine Providence*. Nothing is more univerſally acknowledged, than that God is *Good* and *Juſt*. That well-doing ſhall be rewarded, and evil Actions puniſhed by Him. And yet we ſee that his Diſpenſations in

in this life are many times promiſcuous and uncertain: ſo that *a man cannot judg of love or hatred by all that is before him.* The worſt men are ſometimes in the beſt condition. *If in this life only we had hope, we ſhould be of all men the moſt miſerable,* ſaith the Apoſtle, ſpeaking concerning thoſe primitive times of Perſecution, when the better any man was, the more he was expoſed to ſufferings. 1 Cor. 15. 19.

Now the greater *Uncertainty* there is as to the *preſent Affairs* in this World, by ſo much greater is the *Certainty* of a *future Judgment.*

What could be a greater diſparagement to Divine Providence, than to permit the Calamities and Sufferings which good men undergo in this world, many times upon the account of Religion, to paſs *unrewarded*; and the many Miſchiefs and Prophanations, which wicked men take the advantage of committing, by their Greatneſs and Proſperity in this world, to go *unpuniſhed?*

What great glory would it be, to preſide over this Material World, *Stars* and *Meteors*, *Sea* and *Land*, *Plants* and *Beaſts*, to put theſe things into ſuch a regular courſe, as may be ſuitable to their natures, and the operations for which they are deſigned; and in the mean ſpace to have no proportionable regard, either for thoſe that *reverence the Deity*, or thoſe who *contemn him?*

Amyraldus 'Tis very well ſaid to this purpoſe by a late Author, That not to conduct the courſe of *Nature* in a due manner, might ſpeak ſome defect of *Wiſdom* in God: but not to compenſate *Virtue* and *Vice*, beſides the defect of *Wiſdom*, in not adjuſting things ſuitably to their qualifications, but croſly coupling Proſperity with Vice, and Miſery with Virtue, would argue too great a defect of *Goodneſs* and *Juſtice*. And perhaps it would be leſs expedient (ſaith he) with *Epicurus*, to deny all Providence, than to aſcribe it to ſuch defects. It being leſs unworthy of the Divine Nature,

ture, to neglect the Univerſe altogether, than to adminiſter Human Affairs with ſo much Injuſtice and Irregularity.

And therefore 'tis neceſſary for the vindication of Divine Providence, that there ſhould be a future ſtate and day of Account, wherein every man ſhall be forced to acknowledg, that *verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtleſs there is a God that judgeth the earth.* Pſal. 58. 11.

I crave leave for a word of Application, and I have done. If this be ſo, it will concern us then to enquire,

1. Whether we do in good earneſt *believe* this, That there ſhall be a future ſtate of Reward and Puniſhment, according as mens Lives and Actions have been in this world. If not, why do we profeſs our ſelves to be Chriſtians? Why do we not renounce the Articles of our Creed? Nay, why do we pretend to any Religion? Nothing can be more falſe and unworthy, than in a ſolemn and

religious manner to own that in our Profeſſion, which we do inwardly disbelieve and deny.

2. Do we at any time ſeriouſly *conſider* this, and revolve upon it in our minds? Do we bethink our ſelves, what our condition is like to be at that time, what preparations we have for it, what grounds we have for hope? There cannot poſſibly be any greater ſtupidity, than for a man to be ſlight and careleſs in a buſineſs of ſo great moment. 'Tis the want of believing and conſidering this, that is the chief cauſe of all the viciouſneſs and diſorder in the world.

3. What *impreſſion* doth the belief and conſideration of this make *upon our hearts and lives?* Doth it ſtir up in us, *vehement deſires*, and *carefulneſs of mind* in preparing for that time? If a man were to be tried for life at the next Aſſizes, How would his thoughts be taken up about his defence, what anſwer he ſhould make, what the main Plea is which he ſhould inſiſt upon, by what evidence

it

it might be ſtrengthned and cleared up? He would as ſoon forget to eat his meat, or to go to bed, as to let a buſineſs of this nature ſlip out of his mind.

There is nothing more hard to be reſtrained, than the Impetuous and wild Exorbitances of Youth; And yet ſuch perſons *would not, durſt not* indulge themſelves, according to *the ways of their own hearts*, and *the ſight of their eyes*; If they did really believe and conſider, that *for all these things God would bring them to judgment.* Eccleſ. 11. 9.

The buſineſs of Religion, muſt therefore be above all other things of greateſt conſequence to us, becauſe 'tis the only means to ſecure us, as to our future conditions. The affairs of this life are but of ſhort continuance, and full of uncertainty: And therefore 'tis not much material what a man's condition may be in that reſpect. But there is another ſtate and time which will more nearly concern our care; and

that

that is the great day of Account. And till a man hath in ſome meaſure provided for this, he cannot live comfortably, or ſleep quietly, or have any ſolid peace in his mind; but muſt upon every ſerious reflexion be continually haunted with frightful apprehenſions about his everlaſting condition.

'Tis ſcarce credible that any man ſhould be ſo fottiſh, as to think, he ſhall eſcape dying: and when we do come to depart out of this world, it will then be no advantage to us, that we have had Riches, or Honour, or Power. Theſe things will then vaniſh away, as to our *Poſſeſſion* of them; and the *Remembrance* of them may prove a torment to our thoughts, rather than a comfort; eſpecially if we have reaſon to ſuſpect, that theſe things were our *portion in this life*, and may be reckoned upon as *our good things which we had already*. Certain it is, that they will render our Accounts the more difficult: For to whom much is given, of them much

much ſhall be required. We muſt be anſwerable not only for our *doings*, but for *the fruit of our doings*; All the ſins, or evil conſequences which have been occaſioned by our Miſcarriages, ſhall be ſet upon our ſcore. Jer. 17. 10.

And if theſe things be ſo. *What manner of perſons ought we to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs; looking for, and haſtning unto the coming of the day of God.* If any thing can prevail with men *to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this world,* It muſt be from the conſideration of that *bleſſed hope and glorious appearing of the Great God, our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt:* To whom with the Father, *&c.* 2 Pet. 3. 11, 12. Tit. 2. 12, 13.

A DISCOURSE Concerning the BEAUTY OF Providence.

By the Right Reverend Father in God, *JOHN WILKINS*, late Lord Biſhop of *CHESTER*.

Pſal. 25. 10. *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to ſuch as keep his Covenant and his Teſtimonies.*

The Sixth Edition.

LONDON:
Printed by *A. M.* and *R. R.* for *John Gellibrand* in St. *Pauls Church-Yard*, 1680.

A
DISCOURSE
concerning the
BEAUTY
OF
HOLINESS.

THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

AMongſt all other Doctrines, this of Providence (though it do properly belong to Natural Theology, yet) is of as Univerſal concernment both for knowledg and practice, as any other point in Chriſtian Divinity.

The very Heathen have acknowledged; not only a Univerſal Providence of God, which puts the general kinds of things into a regular way of working; But his particular Providence likewiſe, which takes care of Individual Perſons and Actions. Why elſe do all Religions oblige men to pray unto

unto Him, and to expect His ſpecial aſſiſtance in every kind of want or neceſſity?

But now, though this common Principle be ſo univerſally acknowledged in the Notion *of it, yet men are generally very negligent in the* practical *application of it to particular times and conditions; and ſo loſe that comfort and ſatisfaction that may be reaped from it.*

It is the chief aim and buſineſs of this Diſcourſe, To convince and quicken men unto this duty, as being by ſo much the more ſeaſonable for theſe times, by how much the preſent troubles and confuſions do now call upon us for it.

It cannot but occaſion ſome ſuggeſtions of Diffidence and Infidelity, to conſider thoſe many ſtrange revolutions and changes in the world, which in outward appearance ſeem ſo full of diſorder and wild contingencies. And therefore it muſt needs be of ſpecial conſequence for a man to have his heart ſtabliſhed in the knowledge and

and belief of this truth here inſiſted upon.

In all Ages of the world men have been much ſtartled in their judgments by that unequal diſpenſation which ſeems to be in theſe outward things, That one event ſhould be to the righteous and the wicked. *Nay*, That a juſt man ſhould periſh in his righteouſneſs, and the wicked ſhould proſper in his wickedneſs. That on the ſide of the Oppreſſor there ſhould be might; and the oppreſſed ſhould have none to comfort them. *This hath ſometimes ſo amazed and perplexed the thoughts of conſidering men, that whilſt they looked barely upon events, they could not tell how to extricate themſelves from theſe difficulties; which occaſioned that ſpeech of* Solomon; Surely oppreſſion makes a wiſe man mad; *that is, puts him to his wits end, tranſports him with wild imaginations, whilſt he knows not readily what to anſwer in defence of ſuch proceedings.*

Pſal. 73. Jer. 12.
Eccl. 9.2. Ch. 5. 15. Ch. 8. 14.
C. 4. v. 1.
Ch. 7. v. 7.

But now he that ſhall ſeriouſly conſider how every thing is managed by an All-ſeeing Providence, *which is exactly careful, and infinitely wiſe, ſuch a man will be eaſily ſatisfied, that in all theſe obſcure adminiſtrations (which ſeem unto us ſo full of caſual, negligent, promiſcuous Events) there is an admirable (though unſearchable) contrivance.*

As for the particular deſign which Providence may aim at in ſome diſpenſations, this doth not always fall
Pro. 25.2. *under our reach.* It is the glory of God to conceal a matter. *And many of his works are ſo ordered, that*
Eccl. 8.7, 8. though a man labour to ſeek them out, yet he ſhall not find them. *Yea further,* Though a wiſe man think to know them, yet ſhall he not be able to find them. *And therefore, where we cannot underſtand his ways, it is there our duty, with an humble reverence to believe and admire the wiſdom of them.*

How would this (if rightly conſidered

ſidered and applied) *ſilence all thoſe unſeemly murmurings and complaints of men in theſe times? Remember, there is nothing befalls us but* what the counſel of God had before determined to be done. *And he can order things for the beſt, as well when they croſs our deſires, as when they comply with them.* Act. 4. 28.

And therefore when you ſee the violent perverting of judgment and juſtice in a Province, marvel not at the matter. *That is, Be not tranſported with wonder, or impatience, or unbelief, as if the Providence of God were regardleſs or negligent:* For he that is higher than the higheſt regardeth. *Though they that have the higheſt power amongſt men may be ſo far from* remedying, *that they rather* encourage *ſuch diſorders; yet God hath a ſtrict watchful eye upon them. And though men may be apt to ſecure themſelves in ſuch proceedings, by the greatneſs of their own ſtrength, as if there were nothing above them; yet* there are Eccl. 5. 8.

Ch. 3. 17. higher than they. *And* there is a time, when God will judg both the righteous and the wicked.

Let us be careful of our own duty, to ſerve Providence in the uſual means, and leave the diſpoſal of events to him. It ſhould be every mans chief buſineſs to clear up the evidences *of his particular title and relation unto* this great Governour of the World; *and this will be the ſureſt means to ſet us above the fear or hurt of all outward changes.*

We ſee with what artifice and compliance men will inſinuate themſelves into the affection of thoſe who (according to ſeveral revolutions) are advanced into the places of power. Of how much greater advantage would it be, to get an intereſt in his favour who doth and ſhall always rule over the ſons of men, having all times at his diſpoſal, out of whoſe hands no ſtrength or policy ſhall ever be able to wreſt the ſway and dominion of things?

It cannot but afford ſtrong conſolation unto every true Believer, to conſider, that he who hath the chief influence in all theſe great changes and variety of events in the World, is both his God, *and* his Father.

How did this quiet the heart of old Eli? 1 Sam. 3. 18. It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good. *And* David *upon the ſame conſideration profeſſeth,* I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, becauſe thou didſt it. Pſa. 39. 9. *And our bleſſed Saviour himſelf makes uſe of this argument,* The Cup that my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it? Joh. 18. 11. *Though the portion be bitter and diſpleaſing, yet ſo long as it comes from a loving and careful Father, we have no reaſon to fear any hurt by it.*

And on the other ſide, much of mens unquietneſs and dejection, is occaſioned either by the want of this evidence, or by the neglect of applying it. When they terminate their thoughts upon ſecondary inſtruments, Fearing men that ſhall die, and the ſons of men Ma. 51. 12, 13.

that ſhall be made as graſs: forgetting the Lord their Maker, who ſtretched forth the Heavens, and laid the Foundations of the earth. *That is that which makes men to* fear continually, becauſe of the fury of the oppreſſor.

How would it compoſe all theſe fears and diſtempers, if men would but labour after this aſſurance of their intereſt in God, with the ſame zeal and intention of mind wherewith they proſecute their particular engagements and animoſities againſt one another. He that hath God for his ſtrength and refuge, is always ſure to be on the ſtrongeſt ſide, and need not fear the moſt tempeſtuous mutations. Though the earth be removed, and the Mountains ſhould be carried into the midſt of the Sea: Though the waters thereof roar, and be troubled; and the Mountains ſhake with the ſwelling thereof.

Thus much I thought fit to premiſe in the general, concerning the neceſſity and ſeaſonableneſs of this Subject.

To the Reader.

As for the particular occaſion of publiſhing this Diſcourſe, I have nothing to ſay but this; That being ſolicited for a Copy of it by divers perſons (and ſome of eminent quality) before whom it was occaſionally Preached; I knew not any more convenient way to ſatisfy their deſires, than by ſuch a publick communication of it.

I could ſpeak ſomething from my own *experience concerning the efficacy of this Doctrine, againſt thoſe damps and dejections of mind unto which ſuch times as theſe will expoſe a man. It is my hearty Prayer, that it may be uſeful to* others *alſo in this reſpect.*

Farewel.

To the Reader

THE BEAUTY OF Providence.

ECCLES. III. 11.

He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also He hath set the World in their heart, yet no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

THis *Book* contains *Solomon*'s Expetience in his ſearch for Contentment; which being not to be found amongſt any of the Creatures, he adviſes never to trouble our ſelves in an eager

eager proſecution after them, but to enjoy our poſſeſſions with a cheerful, liberal mind, without perplexing our ſelves in ſuch cares and labours, as may defraud us of thoſe honeſt comforts to be had by them: *for there is nothing better for a man, than that he ſhould eat and drink, and make his Soul enjoy good in his labour*, Ch. 2. v. 24. That is one of the *Concluſions* which *Solomon* infers from his former diſcourſe, and which he further amplifies and confirms in the following parts of his Sermon. It being his chief ſcope in this Book, to direct men how to behave themſelves with cheerfulneſs and contentment under all thoſe great revolutions, and that variety of events which may befall them in the world.

This *Chapter* contains a diſcourſe concerning God's government and diſpoſal of times; and is therefore not unfitly ſtiled, the *Calendar* or *Ephemerides* of ſeaſons: whence the Wiſe-man with divers arguments urges upon us what he had before commended

mended, A cheerful and contented mind.

The Text is one of theſe arguments; *God hath made every thing beautiful in his time:* that is, there is a wiſe order and contrivance in all the works of providence: every particular Event is moſt ſeaſonable in that time which God appoints: and therefore we have no reaſon to repine at our condition, as if matters did not go well with us; for 'tis impoſſible they ſhould have been better than they are: though they do croſs our private hopes and deſires, yet God beſt underſtands the fitteſt order and ſeaſon for all things, making them beautiful in his time.

Alſo he hath ſet the World in their heart: by [*world*] here is not meant this material world; but *ſeculum*, the ſucceſſion and courſe of things, as the original word עולם does properly import. This God hath ſet in, or * *expounded* unto mens hearts; that is, he hath endowed us with an ability to diſcern in ſome meaſure

* נתן טבע

that

that ſeaſonableneſs which he obſerves in the government of the World.

Yet there is no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end: that is, 'tis above humane ability to comprehend the reaſon of all Divine proceedings; we cannot find them fully out from the beginning to the end.

This very ſuitable to the Original.

Others conceive that the words may be more properly rendred thus: *As long as the World ſhall laſt, God doth reveal unto mens hearts the work which he makes, from the beginning to the end, excepting only ſome things unto which man cannot attain.* As if he ſhould have ſaid, in all ages of the World there are ſtill ſome paſſages of Providence, wherein men may be able to diſcern a beauty and comelineſs, though there are ſome other particulars which we cannot underſtand. The ſenſe of both Interpretations being for the ſubſtance much alike.

That's the connexion and meaning of the whole verſe. The Text, according

cording to its natural fulneſs, doth comprize in it theſe three particulars.

1. Every thing has its time.
2. Every thing in its time is beautiful.
3. That is the proper ſeaſon for all things which God appoints.

1. Every thing has its time. *To all things there is an appointed ſeaſon*, Ver. 1. Not only for ſuch natural events as bear in them a kind of neceſſity, *as a time to be born, and a time to dye*, Ver. 2. but alſo for thoſe *voluntary* actions that ſeem to be moſt alterable and contingent; *A time to weep, and a time to laugh*, Ver. 4. The wiſdom of Providence in the government of this lower world, hath diſpoſed to every thing its particular ſeaſon. This is that we call the *fulneſs* of time, the *ripeneſs* of ſeaſon. *Prov.* 27. 1. The Wiſe man ſays there, that the day brings forth events, *Paritura eſt dies*; alluding to a teeming-Mother, to whom there

there is a ſet date for her delivery. So doth Time travel with the decrees of Providence; and for each ſeveral action there is a pregnancy, a fulneſs of time.

2. Every thing in its time is beautiful; even ſuch matters as in their own natures are not without ſome deformity. *A time to kill*, Ver. 3. *A time to mourn*, Ver. 4. *A time of hate, a time of war*, Ver. 8. The ſcorching of Summer, and the extream cold of Winter, though both in themſelves alike diſtaſtful, yet are comely in their ſeaſons; and thoſe times would not be ſo beautiful without them. Nor is it the natural goodneſs of any thing that can make it comely out of its proper ſeaſon. That which *Beauty* is in Bodies, and *Harmony* in Sounds, that is, *Opportunity* in Time. Now as White and Red, which are the uſual Materials of *Beauty*, as thoſe particular Notes of which *Muſick* doth conſiſt, may be ſo diſpoſed of, as to cauſe *deformity* and *diſcord*: ſo actions, which in themſelves are good, may be depraved

ved by their Unſeaſonableneſs.

3. That is the proper ſeaſon for all things which God appoints: Or thus: Every particular Event, is moſt beautiful in that time which the Providence of God hath allotted to it. 'Tis above the contrivance of Human Policy to bring matters about in their fitteſt order. And therefore 'twere but folly to conclude, That things do not fall out well, unleſs they anſwer our deſires: for God beſt underſtands the fitteſt ſeaſon for every purpoſe. And whatſoever, or whenſoever he works, you may be ſure 'tis both beautiful, and in its time; Even thoſe Events which do moſt thwart our private Ends (could all circumſtances be duly conſidered) we ſhould find them to be performed in their moſt comely order, and beſt opportunity.

As for the two firſt Particulars, though they are implied in the Text, yet are they moſt expreſly handled in the former *verſes*: And therefore I ſhall paſs them over without any fur-

further enlargement, insisting only upon this latter, as being more directly agreeable to the main scope of the words.

And 'tis a Subject that in many respects will deserve your more especial attention; 'tis not commonly treated of. And besides, it may very much conduce to our contentment, to settle our hearts against all those conditions that may befal us in the World. 'Tis of very general use and concernment, suitable to all times and occasions: For times of *suffering*, to make us patient and submissive: For times of *mercy*, to make us cheerful and thankful. In brief, it extends to all persons, relations, businesses, seasons; nothing is more generally useful than this, to have our hearts fully perswaded of that wise order and contrivance which there is in the disposal of every particular Event in the World. And 'tis more especially seasonable for times of Trouble and Confusion, when men are apt to mistrust the

Government of *Providence*, as if God did neglect the care of this lower world, and leave all things to their own jarring principles. Then (I ſay) 'tis more eſpecially ſeaſonable to vindicate the care and wiſdom of Providence; to ſhew that every thing which God doth, is beſt; and conſequently, that thoſe many diſtractions and confuſions under which we ſuffer, are far better than any other (though the moſt flouriſhing) condition could be. And that's the Subject I am now to inſiſt upon. The point is this:

Every particular Event is moſt beautiful in that time which the Providence of God hath allotted to it. Propoſ.

A Truth, by ſo much the more ſeaſonable for theſe times, by how much 'tis now the more difficult to believe it.

The Obſervation lies plainly both in the ſcope of the place, and the moſt obvious ſenſe of the words.

Confirmation by Teſtimony Divine.

The Scripture is copious in other proofs to this purpoſe. *Deut.* 32. 4. *His work is perfect, and his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, juſt and right.* Not only his firſt *work* of Creation is exactly good and perfect; but his *ways* of Providence alſo are diſpoſed with Judgment and Righteouſneſs.

So Jer. 32. 19.

So again, *Iſa.* 28. 29. *The Lord of Hoſts is wonderful in counſel, and excellent in working*; that is, every event of Providence is managed and pre-ordained by an admirable Wiſdom, and therefore muſt needs be of *excellent* contrivance.

And again, *Dan.* 2. 20, 21. *Wiſdom and might are his: he changeth the times and the ſeaſons: he removeth Kings, and he ſeeteth up Kings:*

Job 36.5. Thoſe two Attributes of *Strength* and *Wiſdom* are for the moſt part put together in Scripture. God never ſhews any Argument of his *Strength*, but his *Wiſdom* is engaged in it alſo. Thoſe great alterations and

and ſubverſions which happen in the world, do not more demonſtrate the greatneſs of his *Power* in the doing of them, than the greatneſs of his *Wiſdom* in diſpoſing of them for the beſt.

And again, *Pſal.* 104. 24. *O Lord, how manifold are thy works? In wiſdom haſt thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.* Which is as well true of the works of *Providence*, as of the works of *Creation.*

But this Truth is more directly intimated by that Viſion of *Ezekiel* in the firſt Chapter of his Prophecy, wherein he doth expreſs how all Events in the world are wiſely diſpoſed of by the care and government of Providence. The ſcope of that Viſion was, to confirm the faith of the Prophet in the certainty of thoſe things which he was to foretel; becauſe God himſelf, by whom he was inſpired, had ſuch a ſpecial influence in the orderly managing of all inferiour Events.

Though matters might ſeem *to run upon wheels* (as we ſay) to follow their own courſes, without any ſpecial guidance; to go at random; yet *theſe wheels have eyes in them*, Ver. 18. that is, there is the eye of Providence, which directs them in their revolutions. And then beſides, theſe wheels are likewiſe *governed by the four living Creatures*; that is, by the Angels of God, who are fitted for all their ſervices, with four remarkable Endowments.

2 Chron. 16. 9. Prov. 15. 3. ver. 10.

1. With Wiſdom and Prudence, typified in that Viſion, by the *face of a man*.

2. Courage and Reſolution, *the face of a Lion*.

3. Sedulity and Diligence, *the face of an Ox*.

4. Swiftneſs and Diſpatch, *the face of an Eagle*.

In all which, the Prophet doth at large explain unto us, with what deliberate care and fore-caſt the Providence of God doth diſpoſe of all theſe inferior Events.

This

This Truth may yet be further evidenced, from the very Light of Nature, and the Teſtimony of the Heathen. Hence was it that the Ancients did ſet forth their gods with Harps in their hands, to ſhew the harmony they obſerved in the Government of the World. And *Midas* was condemned to wear Aſſes ears, becauſe he preferred *Pan*'s Pipe before *Apollo*'s Lute; Humane Policy before Divine Providence. Humane Teſtimony. *Bacon's* Sap. Vet.

Nay, the Devil himſelf doth acknowledg the wiſdom and ſeaſonableneſs of Divine proceedings, and therefore would fain have ſheltred himſelf under this pretence: *Matth.* 8. 29. *Art thou come to torment us before our time?* Implying, that it would not become the God of Order to do any thing *untimely*. And doubtleſs that muſt needs be an evident and a great Truth which is confeſſed by the mouth of ſo great a Lyar.

For the further confirmation of this, let us a little conſider ſome of

thoſe rugged paſſages of Providence which ſeem to be performed with the greateſt negligence and deformity.

Examples. Look upon the Hiſtory of *Joſeph*: He was (you know) one of the promiſed Seed, concerning whom God had foretold a ſuperiority and dominion over the reſt of his Family. Now, that after this, he ſhould be expoſed to the Treachery of his malicious Brethren: that beſides his nearneſs to ſlaughter from their hands, he ſhould be ſold into a far Countrey, whence there was no hopes ever to hear of him again: That there he ſhould be ſo endangered by the rage of a luſtful woman, and ſuffer ſo tedious and unjuſt Impriſonment; all this might ſeem to be an overſight and neglect of Providence, as if it had forgotten the promotion which *Joſeph* was deſigned to. And yet do but reflect upon the latter part of the ſtory, and you ſhall find, how all theſe misfortunes did mightily conduce, not

not only to his advancement, but all to the ſafety and preſervation of that whole Family, which was then the Viſible Church. So that if each of his Brethren had given him as much money as they ſold him for, it had not been ſo great a kindneſs as he received from their intended Cruelty.

It is an elegant gloſs of St. *Gregory* upon this Story, *Divino judicio quod declinare conati ſunt, renitendo ſervierunt: Ideo venditus eſt à fratribus* Joſeph *ne adoraretur, ſed ideo eſt adoratus, quia venditus.* It was ſo ordered by Providence, that what they ſought to decline, they did promote, even by their ſtriving againſt it; *Joſeph* was therefore ſold by his Brethren, that he might not be worſhiped, and yet he was therefore worſhiped; becauſe he was ſold. *Sic divinum conſilium dum deviatur, impletur; Sic humana ſapientia dum reluctatur, comprehenditur.* Even ſo the Divine Councel is accompliſhed in being oppoſed; ſo Humane

mane Policy is defeated by the means of promoting it.

David. Thus alſo is it in the Hiſtory of *David:* He was (you know) deſigned to a Kingdom; but how many ſtraits was he put to before he attained it? Being forced into the Wilderneſs like a wandring Out-law, and followed there by a company of diſcontented perſons, who was as ready (perhaps) upon every trivial occaſion to revolt from him, as before from *Saul.* But, above all the reſt, his laſt diſtreſs was one of the moſt deſperate, when he was ſpoiled at *Ziglag*, not only of his goods, but his Wives and Children too, when his own Souldiers in their mutiny and diſcontent were ready to ſtone him; there being then but little hopes to ſave his life, much leſs to get a Kingdom. And yet this diſtreſs alſo was, in the Event of it, contrived to his advantage. For having afterwards purſued the *Amalekites*, he not only recovered his own, but got alſo ſuch abundance of other

ſpoils

ſpoils from them, as ſerved him for rich Preſents, whereby he might renew and confirm the friendſhip of his wellwiſhers in *Iſrael*; that after the death of *Saul* (which preſently followed) he might by their free votes be choſe to ſucceed him, 1 *Sam.* 30. and *ch.* 31.

You may obſerve likewiſe ſomewhat to this purpoſe in the ſtory of *Jonah*, when he was ſent to *Nineveh* about ſo weighty a matter as the ſafety of that great and populous City, and that too when their deſtruction was within ken, but forty days off; that he ſhould now make delays and fly to *Tarſhiſh*; that upon ſuch a ſtrait he ſhould run himſelf into hazards, might ſeem to argue ſome careleſneſs and neglect in the Government of Providence. And yet this error of his was ſo wiſely managed in the Event, that it proved a great advantage to the main End of his buſineſs. For 'tis a probable opinion, That theſe Mariners who caſt *Jonah* into the Sea, were a *Jonah.*

ſpecial

ſpecial occaſion that his Preaching was ſo ſucceſful afterwards; the *Ninevites* being by them informed, That this was that Prophet for whom they had lately ſuffered ſo violent a Tempeſt; how the wind ceaſed, and all was calm again, when they had once caſt him into the Sea, from whence it was not poſſible he ſhould be delivered, but by a Miracle. And therefore they concluded, That this muſt needs be ſome man extraordinarily inſpired from above; and that his Preaching was not idle Threats, but ſuch as might juſtly fright them into that rigorous Faſt which afterwards we read of, both for Man and Beaſt. It being the wiſdom of Providence ſo to contrive it, that this offence of *Jonah* ſhould mightily advantage that End which it did ſeem moſt directly to oppoſe.

Paul and *Barnabas.* So likewiſe for that diſſention betwixt *Paul* and *Barnabas*, Act. 15. it might ſeem the moſt unſeaſonable breach that could poſſibly be imagined; when the Church of the Chriſtians

ans was now in its beginning and infancy, that then the two chief Members of it ſhould fall at variance amongſt themſelves, was ſuch an untimely diſſention, that an Enemy could not wiſh them worſe. Nothing could more thwart the promulgation of the Goſpel of Peace, than the contentions of thoſe that preach it. If that State which is already eſtabliſhed into *a Kingdom, divided againſt it ſelf, cannot ſtand*, much leſs could thoſe ſmall beginnings think to encreaſe into a Church by diviſions. Mat. 12. 25.

And yet this likewiſe was ſo diſpoſed of in the event, that it did mightily conduce to the propagation of the Goſpel thorow the whole world: for by this means thoſe two parted aſunder, the one into *Cyprus*, the other into *Syria* and *Cilicia*, and like two mighty ſtreams ſpread themſelves ſeveral ways, that ſo they might the better water the barren and thirſty corners of the world. Ver. 39. 40, 41.

Thus have you ſeen the Beauty of Providence in ſome rugged paſſages of

of it. 'Tis ſo in every other particular, though ſeeming unto us never ſo deformed. *But man cannot find out the work of God from the beginning to the end.*

Confirmation by Reaſon. For the further evidencing of this truth, there are two grounds upon which 'tis bottomed, that being rightly underſtood and conſidered, will make the point very clear.

1. God is exactly careful of every thing.

2. He is infinitely wiſe, for the diſpoſal of all to the beſt.

Reaſon 1. 1. God doth overlook all things by an eſpecial Providence. *Eph.* 1. 11. *He worketh all things after the counſel of his own will.* There is no event in the World but it is ordered both according to God's *will*, and by his *counſel*: Pſal. 135. 6. *Whatſoever the Lord pleaſed, that did he both in Heaven, and in Earth, and in the Sea, and in all deep places.* Not only in the *Heaven*, where his glory is more eſpecially conſpicuous; but in the *Earth* too, where matters ſeem to be full

full of confuſion: *and in the Sea, and in all deep places*, where we cannot ſo much as take notice of them. There is nothing ſo *great*, but is under his *Power*; nothing ſo *little*, but is within his *Care*. Thoſe actions and events that ſeem unto us moſt *free*, *caſual*, *inconſiderable*, are all of them ordered by his Providence.

1. That which is *moſt free*, the hearts and affections of men do follow the guidance of his Decrees; Men may do after their own counſels and inclinations, but they are ſtill ſuitable to his Providence; there is nothing more in our command than our thoughts and words; and yet both *the preparation of the heart, and the anſwer of the tongue, is from the Lord*, Prov. 16. 1.

2. That which ſeems moſt *caſual*: *The diſpoſing the Lot is from him*, Prov. 16. 33. He who is accidentally ſlain by another, is ſaid, *to be delivered into his hands by God*, Exod. 21. 13. That caſual Arrow ſhot at random, was directed by Providence to fulfil the prediction of *Ahab*'s Death, 1 *King.*

1 *King.* 22. 34. There is no liberty for Cauſes to operate in a looſe and ſtragling way; but in matters of greateſt uncertainty, there is a preordained courſe of Effects.

3. *The leaſt, moſt inconſiderable things*, are not neglected by Providence. It was a * prophane ſpeech of the *Aramites*, *That God was the God of the Mountains, not of the Valleys*, 1 King. 20. 23. Whereas he regards *the loweſt, the leaſt* thing, as well as the *greateſt*. The *young Lions*, Pſal. 104. 21. The *Ravens*. Pſal. 147. 9. are provided for by him. He feeds the *Fowls of the air*, adorns the *Lillies*, and clothes *the Graſs of the Field, which to day is, and to morrow is caſt into the Oven*. Sparrows (you know) are but cheap Birds; *Are not two of them ſold for a farthing?* Mat. 10. 29. *And yet not one of theſe do fall to the ground without your Father*. He muſt give the Fowler leave to kill them; nay, when they are upon the wing in their frequent and often repeated motions; yet

* Like that of the Poet, *Non vacat exiguis rebus adeſſe Jovi.*

yet then it is He that muſt appoint them the time and place when and where they ſhall ſettle; and in this ſenſe alſo, *not one of them doth fall to the ground without your Father.* The hairs of your head are yet leſs obſervable, contemptible even to a Proverb, *Pili non facio, Ne pilo quidem meleus.* And yet theſe, with God, are *inter numerata*, amongſt thoſe things whereof he takes an exact account.

That place 1 *Cor.* 9. 9. *Doth God take care for Oxen?* Doth not ſimply exempt ſuch things from the Law of his providence; but 'tis *Argumentum à minori*, and doth imply his more eſpecial care of that higher rank of creatures to whom theſe are ſubordinate. The plain meaning of it is, that if God hath by a particular Law provided, *that the Ox ſhould not be muzled that treads out the corn*; he will be much more careful of the Labourers in his Harveſt.

'Tis recorded to the glory of ſome ancient Generals, that they were able to

to call every common Souldier by his own name; and careful to provide not only *Pay* for their Captains, but *Litter* alſo for the meaneſt Beaſt that did ſerve the Camp. Now you know there is not any Creature but is a Souldier to the Lord of Hoſts. He doth ſometimes muſter up an Army of Lice and Flies; and therefore 'tis but reaſon that his Providence ſhould take care for ſuch things alſo: why ſhould it not be as great an argument of his power to preſerve and *order* theſe leſſer Creatures, as it was at firſt to *make them?* The Creation of a glorious Angel did not coſt him more than that of a deſpicable Fly. Was it not He that out of the ſame primitive nothing put that difference which there is amongſt ſeveral natures? And if the Painter in the ſame Piece draw a ſilken and a wollen garment, why ſhould he value the one above the other, ſince it was the ſame Art that did both make and diſtinguiſh them?

2. As

2. As his *Providence* doth extend to all things, ſo likewiſe does his *Wiſdom.* As he is exactly careful, ſo is he infinitely wiſe; and therefore as able for the contrivance of every the leaſt particular thing, as he would be if he had nothing but that to look after. If the Providence of God had but *one project* on foot, we could eaſily conceive how he might be able to drive that through all the windings and circumſtances of it, with care and wiſdom. Nay, we would truſt any wiſe man with the managing of *a ſingle buſineſs*, when he had nothing elſe to diſtract his endeavours: But for all thoſe multitude of affairs amongſt Men and Angels; nay, for the very *circumſtances* and *manner* of all thoſe ſeveral actions and motions which are performed in every moment of time through the whole World; we cannot conceive but that in ſuch a tumult of buſineſs the eye of Providence may be ſometimes overſeen. But this ariſes from our miſtake of the Divine Nature; we Read 5.

measure God by our own *finite abilities*; whereas we should consider, that that which is *infinite*, cannot be confined by Time, or Number, or Place; but is as well able at all times to look to all things, in all places, as if there were only one business to be cared for. You may see some imperfect resemblance of this amongst the Creatures. Do but consider the *Sun*, how that at the same time, without labour or confusion, it is employed in divers services for all the Creatures under Heaven; the distinctions of Seasons, the growth of several Plants, its various influence upon Minerals, the cherishing of living Creatures, with sundry other such variety of employments, which we are not able so much as to take notice of. Or else, do but mark the nature of the *Soul*, which at the same time perhaps doth *contemplate* Heaven, *direct* the body in its sundry motions, *distribute* the food in a wise proportion to the several parts, not neglecting so much as the least hair about it, but supplying

that

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Now put both theſe Reaſons together: If the Providence of God be thus *exactly careful* of every the leaſt particular; if he be thus *infinitely wiſe* for the diſpoſal of all to the beſt; no wonder then, though *every Event in the World be both beautiful, and in its time.*

Vindication from Doubts and Objections.

For the further clearing of this Truth, there are two *Doubts* or *Queries* to be reſolved, that ſeem to oppoſe it.

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For the further clearing of this Truth, there are two *Doubts* or *Queries* to be reſolved, that ſeem to oppoſe it. Vindication from Doubts and Objections.

1. What's the reaſon why this *Beauty of Providence* doth not appear to us; but that many things ſeem ſo full of diſorder and confuſion in the World?

2. How may this conſiſt with the the permiſſion of ſinful actions, which can neither be *beautiful* nor *ſeaſonable?*

I begin with the firſt, to ſhew the reaſon why in ſo many things we cannot diſcern this *Beauty of Providence.* The verſe of the Text tells us, *That man cannot find out the work of God from the beginning to the end:* That is, 'tis above humane capacity to comprehend the reaſon of all Divine proceedings; we cannot find them fully out from the beginning to the end. And ſo, *Job* 9.10. *He doth great things paſt finding out. Lo, he goeth by me, and I ſee him not: He paſſeth on alſo, but I perceive him not.* And again, *Chap.* 23. 8, 9. *Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work,*

but

but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. The meaning is, that where ever *Job* turned his eyes, there were still some passages of Providence which he could not apprehend the meaning of. God hath reserved this as a peculiar prerogative to himself. *It is not for us to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power*, Acts. 1. 7.

There may be a two-fold reason of this:

1. The obscurity of the things themselves. There are *treasures of wisdom*, Col. 2. 3. not only for their *preciousness*, but for their *privateness* too; *hidden wisdom*: 2 Cor. 1. 7. *secrets of wisdom: and these are double to that which is* (as *Zophar* speaks), *Job* 11. 6. That is, those concealed Providences which we do not discern the reason of, are of much greater proportion than those that appear. We read in that fore-cited place, *Ezek.* 1. 16. of *a wheel within a wheel*, signifying those involutions and in-

tricacies which there are in the ways of Providence. And the *Psalmist* tells us, that *His way is in the Sea, and his paths in the great Waters: and his foot-steps are not known.* Psal. 77. 19.

As it is in the works of *Nature*, where there are many common things of excellent beauty, which for their *littleness* do not fall under our sense: they that have experimented the use of *Microscopes*, can tell, how in the parts of the most minute creatures there may be discerned such gildings and embroideries, and such curious variety as another would scarce believe. Why, 'tis so in the works of *Providence*; there are very many passages of frequent daily occurrence, whose Excellent contrivance doth not fall under our sense or observation.

2. Our own ignorance and short-sightedness; and that in a two-fold respect:

1. We cannot see that *end and drift* which Providence aims at in many par-

particulars; and therefore no wonder though they ſeem unto us rude and uncomely. We meaſure things by this falſe balance of *Opinion*, which weighs only their *outſides*, and doth not look upon their *ends* and *relations*. Now the beauty of things doth conſiſt much in their tendency and reference to their proper ends. If an ignorant man that knows not the reaſon of a Wind-Mill or Water-Mill, ſhould look upon them only as places of *habitation*, he cannot think them well ſituated, where they are ſo much expoſed to the violence of winds and waves; whereas he that underſtands how the wiſdom of the Artificer hath contrived thoſe motions unto *uſeful ends*, muſt needs confeſs a beauty and comelineſs in the work. 'Tis ſo likewiſe in the events of providence, which none can rightly apprehend, but he that underſtands the ſpecial drift and purpoſes which they are deſigned to.

2. We cannot ſee *the whole frame of things*, how ſundry particular Events,

in a mutual relation, do concur to make up the beauty of the whole. He that can diſcern only two or three wheels in a Clock, how they move one againſt another, would preſently think, that there were *contrariety* and *confuſion* in the work. Whereas he that beholds *the whole frame*, and diſcerns how all thoſe divers motions do jointly conduce to the ſame end, cannot chuſe but acknowledg a wiſe order in the contrivance of it. So likewiſe is it in the *frame of times*; where he alone is fit to judg of *particulars*, who underſtands how they refer to *the general*. But now *we are but of yeſterday, and know nothing, becauſe our days upon earth are as a ſhadow*, (ſaith *Bildad*) *Job* 8. 9. We look upon things according to a *ſhort ſucceſſion*, and ſo are not able to diſcern that beauty which there is in their references to other matters *afar off*. But now, *to God a thouſand years is but as one day*. He beholds all things, whether paſt or to come, in the ſame *inſtant*. There is no *ſucceſſion* in Eternity

Pſa. 90. 4. 2 Pet. 3. 8.

ternity, but all things within the reach of time are *preſent* unto that. Though in the revolution of a Wheel, there be a mutual ſucceſſion betwixt the parts contained *in it*; yet an eye that is placed *without*, can at the ſame time diſcern the whole motion. Thus alſo is it in the revolution of Time; where, though there be a mutual ſucceſſion betwixt thoſe things that are contained *under time*; yet God, who is *without* and *above it*, doth at the ſame view, behold all together. So that 'tis no wonder, though many things ſeem beautiful to him, which to us who are ſo ſhort-ſighted, may appear harſh and deformed.

2. The ſecond *Quære* was this, If there be ſuch an over-ruling Providence which doth diſpoſe of all to the beſt; How comes it to paſs that there are ſo many ſinful actions in the World?

To this I anſwer two things:

1. *When men thwart Gods will of Precept, they ſerve his will of Providence.*

videnie. Thoſe particular Intereſts of Gain, Honour, Pleaſure, Revenge, which ſway mens deſires and actions, are wiſely contrived to the promoting of Gods Decrees and Glory. When *Auguſtus* made the general Tax upon the World, His end was to enrich himſelf, and fill his Coffers: But God uſed it as a means to fulfil the Prophecy of Chriſt's birth at *Bethlehem*. *Rehoboam*, and *Jehu*, and *Cyrus*, had all their ſeveral aims in thoſe works wherein they were ſubſervient to providence. And they did ſtill accompliſh his counſel in proſecuting their own deſigns.

2. *That which in reſpect of man's execution is wicked and diſorderly, in reſpect of God's appointment is beautiful and comely.* There could not be any more horrid act, than the betraying and Crucifying of our bleſſed Saviour; and yet even in this (as it was *decreed by the determinate counſel and forerknowledg of God*, Acts 2. 23.) there was the greateſt Miracle of Divine Wiſdom that ever was

was extended to the Creature: ſuch depths of Policy, which all the ſubtilty of Men or Angels was not able to *contrive*, no nor to *ſuſpect*, πολυποικίλος θεσία, as the Apoſtle calls it, *Eph.* 3. 10. *Interchangeable wiſdom* of *curious variety*, as the word ſignifies. Now if God could thus manage the *worſt* action of man to the *beſt* advantage of man, well may we conclude, That every event of Providence is Beautiful in its time.

I have now done with the *Explication* and *Confirmation* of the Text. In the *Application* it may be uſeful for theſe leſſons: *Application*

1. For *Information*, and that in a twofold reſpect:

1. It may teach us our duty, to take notice of, and obſerve the works of Providence. 1. *Uſe* For Information.

2. It may direct us what to judg of the affairs of theſe times under which we are fallen.

1. If all the events of Providence be ſo wiſely contrived, 'tis certainly then our duty to conſider and to take notice

notice of them. *Pſal.* 111. 2. *The works of the Lord are great, ſought out of all them that have pleaſure therein.* And again, Ver. 4. *He hath ſo done his marvellous works, that they ought to be had in remembrance.* Now a man cannot be ſaid to *ſeek out*, or to *remember* that which he doth not carefully obſerve. 'Tis the chief ſcope of that *Pſalm* to excite men unto this duty. And *David* makes it a note of Piety for men to delight themſelves in the contemplation of God's Works, *to remember Him in his ways*, as the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſpeaks. This *Aſaph* found by experience to be a ſpecial Antidote againſt all diffidence and carnal fears; in the 77 *Pſalm*, when he was ſurpriſed with thoſe ſad thoughts, *Will the Lord caſt us off for ever? And will he be no more entreated? Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* &c. He preſently applies himſelf to this remedy, *Ver.* 11. 12. *I will remember the works of the Lord; ſurely I will remember thy wonders of old: I will*

Iſa. 65. 4.

medi-

mediate alſo of thy works, and talk of thy doings.

If a man were but well read in the ſtory and various paſſages of his life, he might be able to make an experimental Divinity of his own. He that is obſervant of Gods *former dealings* and diſpenſations towards him, may be thence furniſhed with a rich treaſury of experience againſt all *future* conditions.

There are very many duties that depend upon a right underſtanding of the times. A man knows not how to order his ſervices of *prayer* and *praiſes*, without ſome obſervation and skill in theſe. It was a great commendation which was given to the men of *Iſſachar*, that *they had underſtanding in the times to know what Iſrael ought to do*, 1 Chron. 12. 32. and the ignorance of theſe the Wiſe-man complains of, as being a very great evil, *Eccleſ.* 9. 12. *For man knoweth not his time; but as fiſhes are taken in an evil net, and as birds are caught in the ſnare: ſo are the ſons of men*

ſnared

ſnared in an evil time, when it falls ſuddenly upon them.

Now this obſervance of Gods works and diſpenſations, is a duty always ſeaſonable, but more eſpecially in ſuch times as theſe. 'Tis commonly obſerved, that though ſmooth and peaceable times are beſt for the *Liver*, the man that lives in them; yet times that are full of change and viciſſitude, are beſt for the *Writer*, the Hiſtorian that writes of them: ſo though quiet ſeaſons may beſt ſuit with our deſires and outward condition; yet theſe diſturbed, confuſed times, may be the beſt improved by obſervation, and do moſt ſet forth the wiſdom of *Providence*.

The *Common* Providence of God in the various ſeaſons and order of Nature, may afford excellent matter for contemplation; much more that *ſpecial* Providence of his in the guidance of humane affairs, which have been always managed with various wiſdom.

But

But especially in his dispensations towards these latter ages, wherein there have been many new, unusual emergencies, such as our forefathers have not known.

How many strange observable passages may a considering man pick out amongst the affairs of these few last years? How strangely hath the whole course of things both in Church and State, been turned about, beyond all mens imaginations? How hath God in every respect, and on all sides, puzled the wisdom of the wise, and enfeebled the strength of the mighty, abating the glory of all humane power, lifting himself up above others, in those things wherein they dealt most proudly, effecting great matters by despised means! What strange ebbs and flows of hope have we known? When men have been most full of confidence, then some unexpected accident hath intervened, and disappointed all: so that the wisest men have been often put to stand at a gaze, not knowing what to

judg

judg of the iſſue of things: And (though we have not had leiſure to obſerve it, yet) there has been ſomething equivalent to this in other Nations; the whole Chriſtian world being generally full of ſtrange Commotions. Now we may certainly conclude, That all theſe unuſual turns and changes of things, are not for nothing. There is ſome great deſign to be accompliſhed by them; 'tis our duty with *diligence* to obſerve the paſſages, and with *patience* to attend the iſſue.

2. This may direct us what to judg of the preſent times under which we are fallen. If it be ſo that every particular Event is ſo exactly regular and beautiful; hence then we may infer, how all that confuſion and diſorder which ſeem to be in the affairs of theſe times is not ſo much in the things themſelves, as in our miſtake of them. The *Rougheſt ſeaſons* (though they may be unſuitable to our deſires) yet have in them a proper comelineſs, as well as times of the *greateſt ſerenity*.

True

True indeed, the Scripture doth ſometimes mention *evil days*; but this is not ſo to be underſtood, as if Time in it ſelf could be evil, either *naturally*, for ſo God pronounceth it good; or *morally*, becauſe 'tis not ſubjected to any Moral Rule; but only *accidentally*, in reſpect of our miſtake and abuſe of it; when either we judg of it according to our own *wiſhes*, or miſpend it according to our own *luſts*. 'Tis only unwiſe, unholy men, that make unhappy times. Eph. 5. 16. 2 Tim. 3. 1, 2.

As in the *works of Creation*, nothing is properly deformed, but every thing hath a peculiar beauty, according to that rank and ſtation wherein 'tis placed: though in vulgar ſpeech we uſe to call a Toad and a Serpent ugly; yet that is only in reference to common eſteem: whereas in reſpect of the Univerſe they are as regular and comely parts as any of the reſt; their outward ſhapes being ſuitable to their inward forms, and thoſe purpoſes for which they

are intended. So it is likewiſe in *the ways of Providence*; thoſe deſigns that in reſpect of our apprehenſions are carried on by a cryptical involved method, are yet in themſelves of as excellent contrivance, as any of thoſe that ſeem to be of more facil and perſpicuous order.

If a man in theſe times ſhall with his reaſon conſult only the outward face of things, they muſt needs ſeem full of irregularities and diſorder; when the ſpirits of men in the proſecution of the ſame ends, and the pretence of *publick welfare*, ſhall be imbittered againſt one another, even
Eccl.5.8. to *publick ruin*: when there is *a violent perverting of judgment and juſtice* in a Nation, and *on the ſide of the op-*
Chap.4.1. *preſſor is might: but the oppreſſed have none to comfort them.*

When there is a total ſubverſion of thoſe degrees in which the order and
Eccl.10.7 harmony of things doth conſiſt, *Servants being on horſes, and Princes walk-*
ob 9.5,6. *ing as ſervants on the earth: When the mountains are removed, and pil-*

lars

lars of the earth tremble. When Religion and Laws (which are the *foundation* of a People) *are out of course.* Pſa. 11. 3.

And yet even in all this, there may be a deſign of Providence for our good. This is certain, All God's Promiſes to his Church are infallibly true, and all his diſpenſations (though never ſo croſs in outward appearance) have a tendency towards the fulfilling of thoſe Promiſes. And why ſhould not a man reſt himſelf in this belief?

In our natural enquiries after the *efficient* cauſe of things, when our Reaſon is at a ſtand, we are fain ſometimes to ſit down, and ſatisfie our ſelves in the notion of *occult qualities*; and therefore much more ſhould we be content to be ignorant in the *final* cauſe of things, which lye more deep and obſcure than the other.

Let no man then preſume to cenſure the ſeveral viciſſitudes and changes of things, as if they were unſea-

ſonable and ill contrived. Remember we are but ſhort-ſighted, and cannot diſcern the various references and dependences amongſt the great affairs in the World, and therefore may be eaſily miſtaken in our opinion of them. We do in this world (for the moſt part) ſee only the *dark ſide* of Providence. At the laſt and great day of *manifeſtation*, when the whole plot of Divine Love ſhall be laid open, then we ſhall be able to diſcern the *Beauty of Providence* in all the rugged paſſages of it; how *tribulation, diſtreſs, perſecution, famine, nakedneſs, peril, and the ſword, do all work for the beſt to thoſe that love God.*

Rom. 8. 28, 35.

Judg nothing therefore before its time. 1 Cor. 4. 5. Conſider, *we cannot ſee the works of God from the beginning to the end.* And you know there is a vaſt diſſerence betwixt the *beginning* and the *end* of a building. It may be our lots perhaps in theſe times to ſee only the *beginning* of the Fabrick; when the old frame is de-

demoliſhed, the rubbiſh lies ſcattered about, the new materials being gathered into heaps. Poſterity perhaps may ſee the *end* of it, when all theſe confuſed preparations ſhall be made up into a beautiful ſtructure.

2. This may ſerve for *reproof* of two ſorts of perſons. *Uſe* 2. For Reproof.

1. Thoſe that do not obſerve or regard the works of the Lord.

2. Thoſe that murmur and repine at them.

1. This may reprove thoſe that do not obſerve or regard the works of the Lord. 'Tis a great argument of infidelity and irreligion, when men let many remarkable Providences paſs by them without notice or obſervation: or when they look upon them only in a ſlight and ſuperficial manner, like thoſe whom the Prophet *Iſaiah* complains of, *Seeing many things, but obſerving* not. Iſa. 42. 20.

This ſin of Inadvertency of God's various Providences, hath been oftentimes ſeverely *threatned* and *puniſhed*

in Scripture, *Iſa.* 5. 12. *Becauſe they regard not the work of the Lord, nor conſider the operation of his hands, therefore is my people gone into captivity.* And again, *Jer.* 12. 11. *The whole land is made deſolate, becauſe no man layeth it to heart.*

The heavieſt Judgments that can befal a Nation, are *Captivity* and *Deſolation.* And yet they are both denounced againſt this ſtupidity and careleſneſs of Spirit. And you may gueſs at the heinouſneſs of the ſin, by the greatneſs of the puniſhment.

'Tis a ſin, that is after a more eſpecial manner appropriated to wicked men. *Pſal.* 10. 4, 5. *The wicked through the pride of his countenance, will not ſeek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. Thy judgments are far above, out of his ſight.* Things that he never enquires after, or regards, as if he were not at all concern'd in them. *Quæ ſupra nos, nihil ad nos:* He looks no further than ſecond Cauſes, unto which he aſcribes

aſcribes the ſucceſs or miſcarriage of Events; and doth not take notice of that Divine Providence, by whoſe influence they are guided.' You ſee this is made the note of wicked men. And therefore, as we would avoid that *cenſure*, ſo ſtill it concerns us to avoid the *ſin*.

2. This may ſerve for the reproof of thoſe that murmur and repine at the works of Providence, that take upon them the Magiſterial judgment of events; as if they could tell how to frame things much better, and to contrive the iſſue of things to greater advantage. How ordinary is it for men to diſcourſe thus concerning the great changes of theſe times? As if the unſearchable ways of God were to be judged before the Tribunal of Humane Reaſon: *Who art thou, O man, that diſputeſt with God* (ſaith the Apoſtle)? How deſpicable, in compariſon to His Infinite Majeſty and Wiſdom? If there be a Commonwealth amongſt Ants and Bees (as ſome Naturaliſts ſay

there is), 'twould make a man ſmile to think, that they ſhould take upon them the cenſure of State-matters amongſt us men: and yet here the diſproportion is finite; whereas betwixt God and man 'tis infinite:

Iſa. 55.8,9. *As the Heavens are higher than the Earth, ſo are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, and my ways than your ways.*

He that will take upon him to mend the contrivance of things, let him remember (ſays one of the *Stoicks*) that the firſt thing he is to do,

Epictetus. is *to mend God*, to teach him wiſdom and care. And if he ſhall think himſelf unfit for that, let him not preſume upon this. For conſider, is not the Providence of God *exactly careful* of every thing? Is not he *infinitely wiſe*, to diſpoſe of all to the beſt? Are not all things *ſubſervient* to his Will? Why certainly then, (however matters may appear to us) yet nothing could have been better then it is, every thing ſhall prove for the beſt, in reſpect of *His Glory*, and

and (if we belong to Him) in reſpect of *our good* too.

'Tis an obſervable check which *Solomon* gives to ſuch preſumptuous perſons as are apt to repine at, and cenſure the courſe of things, *Eccl.* 7. 10. *Say not thou, What is the cauſe why the former days were better than theſe? For thou doſt not enquire wiſely concerning this.* It ſhould ſeem, that thoſe flouriſhing days of *Solomon*, ſo very eminent for all kind of plenty and peace (*Silver being in Jeruſalem as ſtones, and Cedars as the Sycamore in the vale for abundance*) were not yet without ſome moroſe repining ſpirits, who were ſtill maligning the preſent condition of things; and therefore no wonder if we find the like humour among men in other times. 2 Kings 20. 5.

This the Wiſe man doth here reprove, both by a *Prohibition* and a *Reaſon*.

1. A Prohibition, *Say not thou, What is the cauſe why the former days*

days were better than these? That is, Be not tranſported with that common humour of cenſuring and condemning the ſtate of times, and commending the times paſt; as if the courſe of Events were not managed by the ſame wiſe Providence now, which governed the world before. He doth not forbid men to enquire after the cauſe of publick ſufferings: For this is frequently enjoined in Scripture, that upon the occaſion of any ſpecial judgment, we ſhould ſearch and try our hearts, conſider our ways, and our doings, labouring to find out the cauſe of Gods diſpleaſure, that we may accordingly meet him in his ways. But the meaning is, that we ſhould not take upon us the peremptory cenſure of times and diſpenſations, preſuming to condemn thoſe things which we cannot underſtand.

2. The Reaſon. *For thou doſt not enquire wiſely concerning this thing.* That's a figurative expreſſion, ſtiled a *Meioſis*, when a phraſe ſignifies much

much more than the naked words do import. The meaning is, 'tis extreme folly for men to take upon them the cenſure of Times and Providences, as if they were competent Judges of ſuch matters.

There are two places of Scripture that will make up a Syllogiſm to prove this Concluſion.

He that judgeth of a matter before he hath enquired into, and underſtands it, it is folly and ſhame unto him, Prov. 18. 13. But now, *It doth not belong unto us to know the times and the ſeaſons which the Father hath kept in his power*, Act. 1. 7. And therefore it muſt needs be folly to take upon us the Magiſterial cenſure of ſuch things.

Every day hath its proper *evil*, as well the former as theſe; and every day hath its proper *advantage*, as well theſe as the former. The very dregs of time, if we endeavour to make a right uſe of them, may be redeemed into opportunity. Mat. 6. 34. Eph. 5. 16.

There are two reaſons of mens offending in this kind:

1. When

1. When they look only upon ſome *particulars*, without the conſideration of their *proper end*, or *general frame*. Now 'tis true indeed, that ſome particular Events, *ſingly* looked upon, may ſeem very prejudicial; but the whole *contexture* of affairs in their *co-operation*, ſhall prove for the beſt. *All things ſhall work together συνεργεῖ; for good to thoſe that love God*, Rom. 8. 28.

But now 'tis above our capacity to comprehend the whole frame of things: And that is not diſorder in reſpect of the *whole* which to us may appear ſo, being compared with ſome *particulars*. You know, that in the natural body the variety and diſſimilitude of parts, is required to the beauty of the whole; the roundneſs of the head, the length of the arm, the flatneſs of the hand; blackneſs in one part, and whiteneſs in another; all theſe being ſingly compared amongſt themſelves, though they may ſeem to argue ſome oppoſition and deformity, yet look upon them as they ſtand

ſtand in relation to the whole frame, and it will appear how in their ſeveral ways they do each of them conduce to its comelineſs and order. If this lower World had in it no changes and varieties, but were in all reſpects alike, it would not then be ſo properly κόσμος, a beautiful World, as χάος, a Lump or Maſs.

2. Another occaſion of mens offending in this kind, is, when they will judg of Events according as they ſuit with their own wiſhes. And in this caſe, 'tis impoſſible that every humor ſhould be ſatisfied, becauſe particular deſires (beſides their oppoſition to one another) will likewiſe be inconſiſtent with the general deſign. It would ſeem better perhaps to every private man, if he himſelf were a Magiſtrate, or a King; and every common Soldier a Commander, or a General. But how could this conſiſt with the exigencies of the Commonwealth, or an Army, where there muſt be degrees, and diſproportion of places, according to the neceſſity of ſeveral

veral employments? 'Tis ſo in the government of this great Univerſe: that difference which there is betwixt particular things, and times, and perſons, doth much conduce to the beauty and conveniency of the whole.

'Tis our ſafeſt way then to conclude, that all matters are for the beſt, *beautiful in their times*, though to us they may ſeem full of diſorder and contrariety. Thus the Apoſtle in that remarkable place, *Rom.* 11.33, ſpeaking concerning the rejection of the *Jews*, when God would caſt off and deſtroy his peculiar people, and that for his own glory and advantage; he concludes, *His judgments are unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out: But of him, and to him are all things*: as if he ſhould have ſaid, God will do this ſtrange work; and though for my part I know not the reaſon of it, *His judgments are unſearchable*, &c. yet ſure I am, that *of him and to him are all things*; that is, as the making of all things was *of his power*, ſo the reſolution of all things ſhould be *to his glory*.

Though

Though *his judgments are as the great deep*, for their obſcurity and unmeaſurableneſs, not to be fathomed by our ſhallow apprehenſions; yet *his righteouſneſs is as the ſtrong mountains*, for their eminency and ſtableneſs; *Pſal.* 36. 6. *Though clouds and darkneſs may be round about him, yet righteouſneſs and judgment are the habitation of his throne*, Pſal. 97. 2.

3. This may ſerve for *Exhortation*, to perſwade us unto theſe four duties. *Uſe* 3. For Exhortation.

1. Not to be too haſty in our deſire or proſecution of any thing.

2. Nor to trouble our ſelves with any ſolicitous care about the ſucceſs of things.

3. To be equally prepared for all future Events.

4. To behave our ſelves with [redacted]-fulneſs and contentment in all conditions. cheerfulneſs

1. Hence we learn, Not to be *too haſty* in our deſire or proſecution of any thing. God beſt knows the fitteſt ſeaſon for every Event; we ſhall have

have it when its time is come; and before that, 'twould not be beautiful:

Prov. 25. 13. *Like ſnow in Harveſt* (as the Wiſe man ſpeaks) which though it might poſſibly be ſome *refreſhment* to [illegible] in particular, yet would be a *deformity* in the courſe of Nature.

There are ſome men whom the Prophet ſtiles of *a haſty heart*, נמהרילב *Iſa.* 35. 4. Who are too heady and impatient in their hopes. And it is a weakneſs that ariſes from our infidelity and diſtruſt of Providence. *For he that believeth, maketh no haſte*, Iſa. 28. 16. 'Tis God's uſual courſe to defer what he promiſes, thereby to exerciſe our faith, to put an edg on our deſires, and a value upon the bleſſing. In natural affairs, we are fain to expect the proper ſeaſon and *maturity* of things; the Husbandman will wait for his Harveſt; he doth not expect to ſow and reap both in a day. It ſhould be ſo likewiſe in other matters. And ſince that is always the fitteſt time for every thing which God appoints, it will become us then patiently

Tranſlated *Fearful.*

tiently to wait his leiſure, and not with over-haſty deſires to run before him.

Abraham was fain to tarry a long time for a Son, *David* for a Kingdom, and the whole World for *Chriſt*. He that rightly underſtands the worth of any bleſſing, and his own want, cannot think much to wait for it. The poor man, at the Pool of *Bethesda*, being ſenſible of his own lameneſs, was content to tarry there thirty eight years in hopes of a remedy. Suppoſe a Promiſe were deferred to the utmoſt, yet do but compare the ſhortneſs of our lives with the duration of our ſouls, and then no delay can ſeem tedious. *Neq; enim eſt aliquid in tam brevibus vitæ metis ita ſerum, quod longum expectare immortalis putet animus.* A man conſcious to himſelf of his own immortality, cannot think any time long which is confined within the narrow bounds of life. Boetius Conſol. l. 2.

Is there then any mercy which thou expecteſt? Do not over-raſhly

haſten it with any indirect project, as if thou wert able to help the Providence of God with wiles and devices of thine own. Though it be long in coming, yet it will come at laſt; it cannot be more ſlow than ſure. When *Iſaac* was laid upon the Altar, and bound for a Sacrifice, and his Father's hand lift up for the fatal blow, yet then there came a reſcue from Heaven, which would not have been ſo beautiful, if by any unlawful act it had been haſtened before that time, either by *Abraham*'s ſparing his Son, or *Iſaac*'s reſiſting his Father.

Joſeph did undergo a tedious impriſonment in the Land of *Egypt*; 'tis likely, being the Key-keeper, he might have taken his own time, and have ſcaped when he would; but then he had loſt his preferment: whereas by tarrying God's leiſure, he was delivered with advantage. Though *David* had been a long while anointed to a Kingdom, yet becauſe he did not uſe any haſty means for the enjoying of it, therefore did Providence clear

clear the Paſſage for him, and proſpered it to him afterwards. He might have killed *Saul* in the Cave, and *Abner* too, when he found them ſleeping; but then he had been over-haſty; 'twere better they ſhould fall by their Enemies. *The Lord ſhall ſmite them when their day ſhall come to dye*, 1. Sam. 26. 10. And before that, 'twould be but raſhneſs to attempt it. And ſo likewiſe when he ſtopt himſelf in his haſte after *Nabal*'s life, you know within a while after God took him away by his own immediate hand, and gave both his Wife and Eſtate to *David*. 1. Sam. 14 11. 26. 17.

An over-forwardneſs in the haſtening of our hopes, is the ready way to imbitter them unto us. You know how much trouble and contention there grew from that haſty act of *Sarah*, when in her miſtruſt of the Promiſe, and fear of being childleſs, ſhe muſt needs give *Hagar* to *Abraham*.

So likewiſe for *Jacob*'s too much haſte in getting the bleſſing by a

wrong means, you know it coſt him afterwards many dangers, and a tedious exile. Whereas if he had tarried longer, God would have brought it about for him by a more eaſie and beautiful way.

Gods time is the beſt; and he never fails his own ſeaſon: *I the Lord will haſten it in its time*, Iſa. 60. 22. For us to meaſure the fitneſs of ſeaſons by our own weak apprehenſions, is not this to ſet the Sun by our Dial? we are too ſhort-ſighted, apt to antedate the Promiſes. *The Lord will ariſe, and have mercy upon Sion, when the time to favour her, yea, when the ſet-time is come.* Pſal. 102.13.

2. Hence we learn, Not to trouble our ſelves with any ſolicitous care about the ſucceſs of things. To ſerve Providence in the uſual *means*, that is our work; but the *iſſue* and *event* of things, that's God's work, we have nothing to do in it. That which is not under our *power*, ſhould not be under our *care*. If there be nothing at our diſpoſal, but that all Events do

Ver. 9.

depend

depend upon an higher Providence, 'twere but a vain thing to buſie our ſelves with hopes and fears about them. Much of the diſquietneſs amongſt men in the World, ariſes from hence, that they buſie themſelves about God's work, and neglect their own.

Is there then an *evil* thou *feareſt* why, 'tis not in the power of any creature to hurt thee. Though men ſhould uſe plots and threats againſt thee, yet they can do nothing. They ſate together, and counſelled againſt *David*, deviſing to take away his life, *Pſal.* 31. 13. But what was his comfort? Why, ſaith he, *Ver.* 15. *My times are in thy hands, O Lord.* He knew that no ill ſucceſs towards him was in the power of others.

Or is there an evil thou *feeleſt?* why, it comes from the hand of God. Be not then impatient at the Inſtrument. 'Tis but a childiſh curriſh thing to beat the rod, or bite the ſtone that hurt thee. *David* could quietly undergo the railing of *Shimei*, when once he had diſcer-

ned in it the Providence of God.

Or is there *a good thou hopeſt for?* why, it is not within the reach of thy abilities. And therefore 'twere but in vain to think thou couldſt command it by thine own endeavours. We would count it a mad thing for one that is naturally low, to buſie himſelf in the ſtudy and labour of growing tall, Eccl. 9, 11. becauſe this is not alterable by any thing in our power; *ſince no man can add one cubit to his ſtature.* Why, 'tis ſo in other things likewiſe; *God* doth as well ſet bounds to our *eſtates*, as to our *ſtatures*; and of our ſelves we can as little add one *penny* to that, as one *cubit* to this. And therefore, never let any one think that he can raiſe himſelf as he pleaſes, and be the Maſter of his own Fortunes. Though he were furniſhed with the greateſt helps and probabilities of advancement; yet *the battel is not always to the ſtrong, nor the race to the ſwift; neither bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour to men of skill;*

but

but time and chance happen to them all. That is, there is a ſecret Providence, which doth ſo unavoidably diſpoſe of theſe lower Events, that the likelieſt means we can uſe, cannot promiſe us any certain ſucceſs.

They that with a compaſs-wiſdom will delay Events, that with forecaſts and proviſions will bind Providence; for the moſt part, are not only diſappointed in what they hoped for, but do meet with a curſe inſtead of it. See that place, *Iſa.* 50. 11. *Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compaſs your ſelves about with ſparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the ſparks that you have kindled; this ſhall you have of my hands, you ſhall lye down in ſorrow.*

3. Hence we learn to be equally prepared for all future Events, not wiſhing for one more than another. Whatever comes to paſs ſhall be *beautiful*, and therefore ſhould be *welcome.* All things that befall us, ſhall lead us on to the ſame Journey's end, Happineſs. And there-

fore we ſhould not in our expectation of future matters, engage our ſelves in the deſire of any particular ſucceſs; but with a *Traveller's* indifferency (as *Epictetus* ſpeaks in *Arian*) who when he comes to doubtful turnings, doth not deſire one way ſhould be true more than another. So ſhould we entertain every thing that we meet with in our paſſage through this life; eſpecially ſince we are ſure that there is none of them but (if we belong to God) ſhall further us in that which is our main buſineſs, our *journey* to Happineſs.

Diſſ. l. 4. c. 7.

And therefore to be very ſolicitous about any particular ſucceſs, what is it but to limit and confine the power of God? Nay, to prefer our own policy before the wiſdom of Providence; as if we alone were able to diſcern what would be the beſt iſſue of things; Mark how the ſame Heathen beſpeaks ſuch a perſon: Thou fooliſh man (ſaith he) doſt thou not deſire that which will be moſt conve-

nient

nient for thee? And can there be any thing better than what God appoints? τὶ τὸ ὅσον ἐπὶ σοὶ διαφθείρει τὸν κριτὴν, παραγεις τὸν σύβουλον. Wherefore by ſuch immoderate and eager deſires, thou doſt as much as in thee lies to corrupt thy Judg, and ſeduce thy Counſellor.

The *Stoicks* have many excellent paſſages to this purpoſe: *Nunquam ſapientem pœnitentiæ ſubit* (ſaith *Seneca*) *quia nihil melius illo tempore fieri potuit quam quod factum eſt.* A wiſe man is never troubled at any croſs Event; he knows nothing could have been better than it is. *Omina illi ſuccedunt; nihil preter opinionem accidit.* All things are ſucceſsful to him, he is diſappointed in nothing, becauſe indifferent to every thing. Whilſt others are toſſed up and down betwixt hopes and fears, his mind is eſtabliſhed.

De benef. lib. 4. 34.

Now if meer *Reaſon* could advance *Heathen* men to ſuch reſolutions, much more then ſhould a *Chriſtian's Faith* in the Providence of God,

God, with thoſe many Promiſes wherein he hath an intereſt, raiſe his mind to this Heroick temper, and make him bend himſelf with a ſubmiſſive compliance unto every condition.

Object. Object. *But what then, may not a man (nay, ſhould he not) be very earneſt in his deſires and prayers, for ſome particular deliverance or bleſſing?*

Sol. I anſwer, Yes. But in all *temporal* matters, it muſt be ſtill with a tacit ſubmiſſion to the will of God, who knows better what is fit for us, than we our ſelves. See the Example of *David* to this purpoſe, 2 *Sam.* 15. 25. He was there put to a very great exigence, his Son *Abſolom* had ſuddenly raiſed a great Army againſt him, inſomuch as he was fain to fly for his life: There were ſome of the Prieſts adhered to him, and followed him with the Ark; but he, upon ſerious thoughts, deſires them to return

turn again: For (ſaith he) *if I ſhall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and ſhew me both it, and his Habitation. But if he thus ſay unto me, I have no delight in thee; behold here I am, let him do to me as ſeemeth good unto him.* Here's no deep anxiety or æſtuation of Spirit, no bitter exclaiming againſt his unnatural Son, and diſloyal Subjects; but quiet ſuccumbency, an indifferent compoſure of mind, which reſolves to be content in every condition. He puts the caſe both ways, and is provided for either. If it prove after *this* manner, why then ſo; *otherwiſe*, then thus. So true is that common Emblem, That every wiſe man is a *Cube* or *Dye*, not to be flung from his bottom. Let him be caſt any way, he ſtill lights upon his right *baſis*; whatever his *condition* may be, *Si fractus illabatur orbis*, yet his *mind* is ſtill calm and peaceable.

Object.

Object. Obj. *But would you have a man turn* Stoick? *Should he not be troubled at the afflictions that befall him?*

Sol. *Sol.* I anſwer: Yes, He muſt be ſenſible of his ſufferings, and conſequently cannot but grieve under them, eſpecially ſo far as his own ſin and neglect hath occaſioned them. But then it ſhould be his care to quiet his heart from immoderate trouble, by the conſideration of that wiſe Providence, who doth diſpoſe of all for the beſt.

4. *Laſtly*, Hence we learn, To behave our ſelves with *cheerfulneſs* and *contentment* under all thoſe conditions which the Providence of God ſhall think fitteſt for us. 'Tis the Wiſe-man's own inference from the Text in the Verſes immediately after it: *There is nothing better, than for a man to rejoyce, and do good in his life; that he ſhould eat and drink, and enjoy the good of his labour.* For

V. 12,13.

if

if every thing be beſt which God appoints, we have no reaſon then to be troubled at any Event. What though it do croſs our deſires, yet 'twould not have been ſo well, if it had been otherwiſe. Things cannot be better with us than they are. *David* thought it a hard caſe, that his Child by *Bathſheba* muſt dye. But did he loſe any thing by it? Was it not better for him to have ſuch a legitimate Heir as *Solomon* was? We are but ill contrivers of our own welfare, and therefore ſhould without murmuring ſubmit our ſelves and affairs to the government of Providence. What though that do ſtraiten us in our deſires? You are content to let the *Phyſician* bar you of many things, becauſe he hath caſt your water, felt your pulſe. Conſider then, doth it not as much concern us to provide for the Salvation of our Souls, as the health of our Bodies? Or doth not God underſtand this, as well as the *Phyſician* that? What reaſon have we then to re-

Æquum eſt ut homini placeat, quicquid placet Deo.

repine at his proceedings? He was a wiſe Son in *Plutarch*, who being told by a friend that his Father would diſinherit him, anſwered, *Non faciet niſi faciendum:* He will do nothing but vvhat he ſhould. Thus ſhould a Chriſtian willingly reſign up himſelf in every condition, to the diſpoſal of Providence.

Do but apply this Conſideration according to the ſeveral occaſions of your lives. When your hearts are at any time amazed or dejected with the thoughts of the *publick* confuſions; remember, that God ſits in Heaven, obſerving and ordering all theſe inferior motions for the beſt.

And ſo too in the caſe of *particular* ſufferings, 'tis likely that there is not any amongſt you, but hath ſome kind of *private* trouble and grievance to which he is more eſpecially expoſed; either weakneſs of body, or too narrow a fortune, loſſes in your eſtates, diſappointment in your hopes, unhappy relations, or the like. And theſe things, as we are

are *men*, cannot chuſe but grate upon our ſpirits with ſome kind of harſhneſs and diſcontent. But now as *believers*, we have a remedy againſt them. For conſider, there is nothing befalls us by chance. All things are ordered by the deliberate counſel and fore-knowledg of God. He is as exactly careful of every one of us, as if he had nothing elſe to look after. Do not think that any trouble befalls you, becauſe he doth not regard; for his Care and Providence doth extend to all things: nor becauſe he *cannot* help; for He is Almighty: nor becauſe he will not; for He is equally infinite in all his Attributes: But becauſe his *Wiſdom* finds that condition to be fitteſt for thee: there is ſomething amiſs which ſhould be mended. When the ſuperfluous humour is corrected, the Phyſical Potion ſhall be taken away. And 'tis not reaſonable to expect Phyſick and Health both together. When the wound is healed, the ſmarting plaſter ſhall be removed. And thou

thou mayeſt confidently ſay with *David*, Pſal. 119.75. *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulneſs haſt afflicted me.*

How happy might we be, if we could ſettle our hearts upon theſe Conſiderations!

FINIS.